NEA Today
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February 2002

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Turnaround Time

Kansas teacher Patty Kamper's low-income high school has gone from browbeaten to upbeat.

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- Cancer survivors become advocates, p. 33

NEA Today

February 2002

Volume 20 • Number 5

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Reed Hoffmann

Recipe for a Great School

Five years ago, Wyandotte High in Kansas City, Kansas, was in crisis. Now, the focus is on learning instead of discipline. David Oland and his colleagues have found the recipe for turning around a school, and they're ready to share it.

Cover photo by Reed Hoffmann

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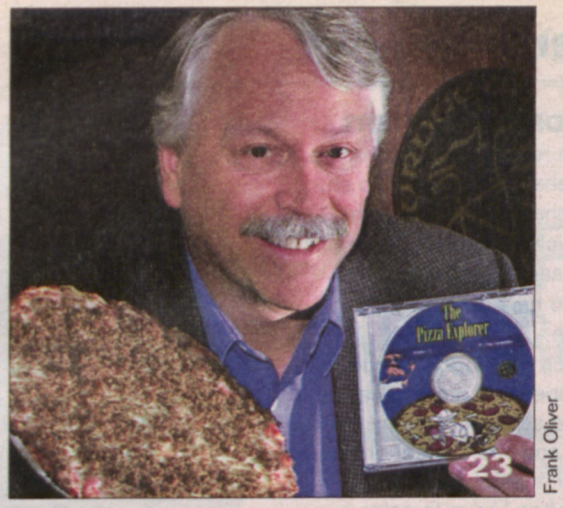

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Letters

THE PARENT CONNECTION

I've been a teacher for 13 years and a parent for four years. I agree with Bob Chase that there are "real obstacles to parent-school cooperation" (President's Viewpoint, January) But I disagree that teachers "must go to [parents]."

Chase says that "parents are crunched for time." As a full-time teacher and a full-time parent, I can second ... and third ... that! But it is my job as a parent to be a parent—which includes getting involved in my child's education. It is not the teacher's job to parent me!

Besides, like it or not, many of our students live in areas that are dangerous. Given the continual rise in school violence, I am shocked that anyone would suggest home visits and/or workplace visits as a possibility.

I have many working parents who cannot meet with me during the "normal" school hours. So I utilize phone conferences and E-mail to keep in touch. I feel these are safer, more reasonable solutions.

Lorna Maxwell
Newbury Park, California

INCLUSION FOR ALL

I really enjoyed your article on inclusion. (January cover story) I wanted to let you know that my sixth grade team of teachers at Denmark Middle School have been successfully implementing inclusion for years. I'm a resource teacher and my team offers support in the encore classes such as Spanish, keyboarding etc., as well as the core classes. I also have the special needs students for homeroom, guided study, and study hall, daily. Many of my students are on the honor roll and tutor elementary students during the school day. Several of them excel in extracurricular activities, and our program includes all levels of special needs students.

It would be a great idea to do an article based on the students' perception of what it is like to experience full inclusion and have special needs.

Mary Bukoski
Denmark, Wisconsin

DOES DRESS MATTER?

With regard to the November debate question, "Do students behave better when the teacher is well dressed?" I would have to say my answer is yes. But I also have to qualify my response.

I teach only foreign students. They respect me more because I come to school every day wearing a tie and sport jacket or suit. However, the opposite reaction occurs when I have to enter a teacher's room where students are predominantly Anglo. Instead of respect, I hear jeers and putdowns. Therefore, in my school being well dressed brings different reactions from different cultural groups.

If I had to teach Anglo students, I would have to change my ways and be more casual. I would also feel less of a professional.

Someone once wrote a letter to the editor in our local paper in which that person chastised the teachers for dressing so sloppily while the students have to wear a uniform. Enough said.

Gerald Lunderville
Long Beach, California

John Ceballos

How shallow a teacher must think her students are if she believes that their behavior is controlled by how she dresses.

I am an art teacher who dresses very casually. Ironically, I had more behavior problems when I was a newer teacher and for over six years bowed to peer pressure to dress "in a professional manner." Somehow teaching ceramics and sculpture didn't really work very well with "professional" dress standards. Dressing up inhibited my movements and my willingness to get down and dirty with my ceramic students. Since I decided to dress as befits a ceramics teacher who basically works with mud all day, I have been more comfortable, more relaxed, happier, and more willing to get a little dirty in order to help students. Since then, I have also had far fewer discipline problems in my classroom.

I will admit that a teacher should be clean and well-groomed in academic classes, but I do not believe that dressing casually creates a feeling of disrespect or shows "a lack of preparation and organizational skills," as one Debater noted. This is a very prejudiced and narrow view of the quality of a teacher.

Cindy Husar
Ft. Wayne, Indiana

DISRUPTIVE STUDENTS

As a veteran of 29 years in the classroom, it is my position that chronically disruptive students need to be removed permanently from the traditional classroom setting ("Should teachers have the authority to remove disruptive students from their classes permanently" Debate, January).

For many years, I have had my classes held hostage by the demands of students who, despite all the intervention of counselors, peer mediation, parental conferences, and more, insisted upon and even delighted in disrupting the class and stealing instructional time. Not only were other students denied opportunity of my full attention, but I was deprived of doing what I was hired to do: teach.

When all attempts to remedy the situtation fail, it is time to consider the rights of the majority of the students who are there to learn. For too long we have allowed the "rights" of one disruptive student to deprive an entire classroom of valuable instructional time and the right to a peaceful educational setting.

Fortunately, in my building we now have an administrator who feels the same way—students who insist on disruption despite teacher and administrative attempts to resolve the situation are removed from that classroom so the rest of the students are not denied an opportunity to learn and the teacher is not denied an opportunity to teach. The students appreciate this as well as the staff.

Thomas Hanrahan
Saline, Illinois

I am always amazed at how easily people blame students with disabilities for the lion's share of classroom problems.

In the January Debate, the teacher who argues for removing students makes her argument by blaming students and parents for the problem. It is implied that the student is "bad." This shows a lack of understanding of the effects of a disability on a child. They are not bad. They have a real problem—a disability. It is not their fault. We must model compassion if we are ever to have a meaningful effect on values. If we don't have compassion then that is what we teach.

All students benefit from positive role models. The child with the disability benefits from the appropriate behavior of his classmates, the non-disabled classmates benefit from watching someone try—against all odds—to learn and all students benefit.

Ben Adams
Los Angeles, California

There comes a point, when interventions have been attempted, parents have been contacted, and virtually all efforts have been made to allow a disruptive student the opportunity to learn, that removal is the best option.

Schools need to make accommodations for this. Many disruptive students cannot function with the numerous distractions in the classroom, their classmates being the number one distraction. These students will benefit greatly from small group or one-to-one instruction. Schools, and Mr. Richardson (Jan. 2002) need to realize this, and acknowledge the need to accommodate the teachers in this regard.

Fast forward to high school. Disruptive students are keen enough to realize they can play the system, and they do. Removal should also be considered for students who do absolutely no work, or have an abnormal number of absences. Their "needs" require an alternate form of education. It is in their best interests.

Brian Miller
San Luis Obispo, California

Teachers should have the right to ask a disruptive student to leave the classroom. First, the teacher should try intervention: speak to the student in the hall, ask the student to confer after school regarding WHY he/she is in such need of attention, and set up a contract with the student regarding disruptive behavior. If the disruptive student is habitual, and I have had some over the years, the teacher should seek help and advice from the counselor and/or principal. Parents should be notified. If all methods fail, the student should fulfill the consequences for actions. We all have consequences. How does a student learn if he/she isn't part of the plan and the consequences? It is not fair to other students when attention-seekers disrupt. Disruptive students have other problems. They are only acting out. Removal is a temporary solution. I would rather have one parent call me regarding one student removal than many calls asking me why the disruption continues and nothing is done. It makes us all look ineffective.

Judy Johnson
Spencer, Iowa

COMMERCIAL SPOT

I disagree with the premise of "Get Rid of Ads" (Innovation, January). According to Gary Ruskin of Commercial Alert, "Our schools should be sacred ground because children have enough exposure to advertisers." He also states, "Children go to school to learn how to read, write and think."

I agree. So as part of my introduction to debate, I taught different aspects of persuasion, including advertisements. The students became more aware of selling techniques and better informed consumers.

Schools are about educating students about the world, not hiding them from it.

Richard L.Marcus
Bellingham, Washington

Was this a contest "ad" in *NEA Today?* It seems that Commercial Alert wants us to advertise their point of view to our students through a "contest." Very sly.

One $5,000 prize could not begin to help any school the way Channel One does. Part of education includes creating wise consumers, and our students are exposed to ads every day and everywhere.

If I can give my students things my school system cannot provide (due to fiscal limitations) by allowing a few more ads in their lives, it's worth it.

Lynda Davidson
Covington, Tennessee

LESSONS OF FREE TRADE

Guy Costello wrote eloquently about a factory in his district cutting wages and thousands of jobs over the past decades (My Turn, January). Many of us have had to face such dislocations in our communities, and these changes tug at our hearts.

Unfortunately, I believe Costello's response—to oppose trade policies such as the Free Trade of the Americas Act (FTAA)—is counterproductive.

The FTAA, if it becomes law, is perhaps the best hope for bringing those jobs back. It will reduce barriers to trade and spur exports and economic growth for American companies, farmers, and small businesses. It will create a $10 trillion common market from the Bering Strait to Tierra del Fuego. Increased exports means increased economic growth and increased jobs.

Rather than showing students that we should erect barriers to any changes that may entail some pain, we should let them know that change will be a part of their lives and that they can best prepare for it by acquiring the skills and abilities to adapt.

Michael Yell
Hudson, Wisconsin

LEAVING TEACHING

Recently, I read Kim Jarman's letter about her reasons for wanting to leave teaching (Letters, October). It was refreshing to hear someone who has the courage to say it like it is.

Like Ms. Jarman, I love teaching. Working with the students is often very rewarding. But the job of teaching is becoming more impossible every day.

Virtually all of the responsibility for raising academic and behavioral standards is placed squarely on the shoulders of teachers and other school staff. Most of us have spent years knocking ourselves out to raise standards. After only 10 years, I can't imagine having the stamina to stay until retirement.

When I ask, "When will educational reform come to the HOMES of American students?" almost everyone appears to be mute on the subject: legislators, parents, educational agencies, the media, and even those of us who work in schools. Far too few parents spend time with their children.

Parents have ALWAYS been the primary role-models and teachers for their own children. How can teachers raise academic and behavioral standards if our own students and their parents will not accept their own role in this huge endeavor called "educational reform"? School staff cannot do this alone.

Like Ms. Jarman, I must decide if I will leave teaching. After 10 years, I still owe $22,000 for school debts. While my non-teaching friends are out enjoying their evenings and weekends, I'm at home analyzing and scoring student work, reading curriculum manuals, and pondering the choice:

I must either lower my standards and stop assigning homework, or I must leave teaching to go to a profession where hard work and high standards are appreciated by both the customers and the management. It's a choice I never dreamed I'd be making when, starry-eyed, I started teaching.

Karen Hertz
Bothell, Washington

Let's Talk

Share your ideas, comments, and opinions with *NEA Today* in one of five ways:

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Letters are edited for length and clarity.

President's Viewpoint

BY BOB CHASE

New Respect, Not Reproach

America's lowest-performing public schools must be our highest priority.

At a conference on high-priority schools last fall, I asked one teacher why she was there. She replied: "Because my school is 'on the wall.'" I asked: "What do you mean by on the wall?'" She explained: "We're on the wall of shame. That's what we say about schools like mine that have been labeled 'low performing' by the state department of education."

She explained further: "We work our hearts out in that school. Almost half of the students are immigrants, just learning English. Ninety percent of the kids live in poverty. But because of the way our school is labeled by the state, all the teachers feel like they have a scarlet F [for failure] sewn on their collar."

I was appalled. This teacher was smart, conscientious, and obviously very professional. She deserves respect, not reproach.

Let's be clear. She and her colleagues in high-poverty schools across America are not failures, they are quiet heroes. They are grappling with the most difficult—and compelling—challenge we face in our public schools: successfully educating children of poverty and disadvantage.

Public schools must make do with less than $4 billion in new annual funding—a sum that is simply inadequate.

Last summer at our NEA Representative Assembly, I pledged that I would seize every opportunity to visit priority schools. Since then, I have toured struggling school districts from Oakland to Atlanta, Milwaukee to Omaha. Everywhere I've gone, I have met teachers, support professionals, and administrators who are passionate about bringing out the best in their students.

But these dedicated folks can't do it alone. And they can't do it without resources.

On that score, it bears remembering that not all schools in poor communities are "low performing." In December, the Education Trust, a nonprofit advocacy group, released a study showing that some 4,500 public elementary and secondary schools serving mostly poor and minority students are among the top academic achievers in their states.

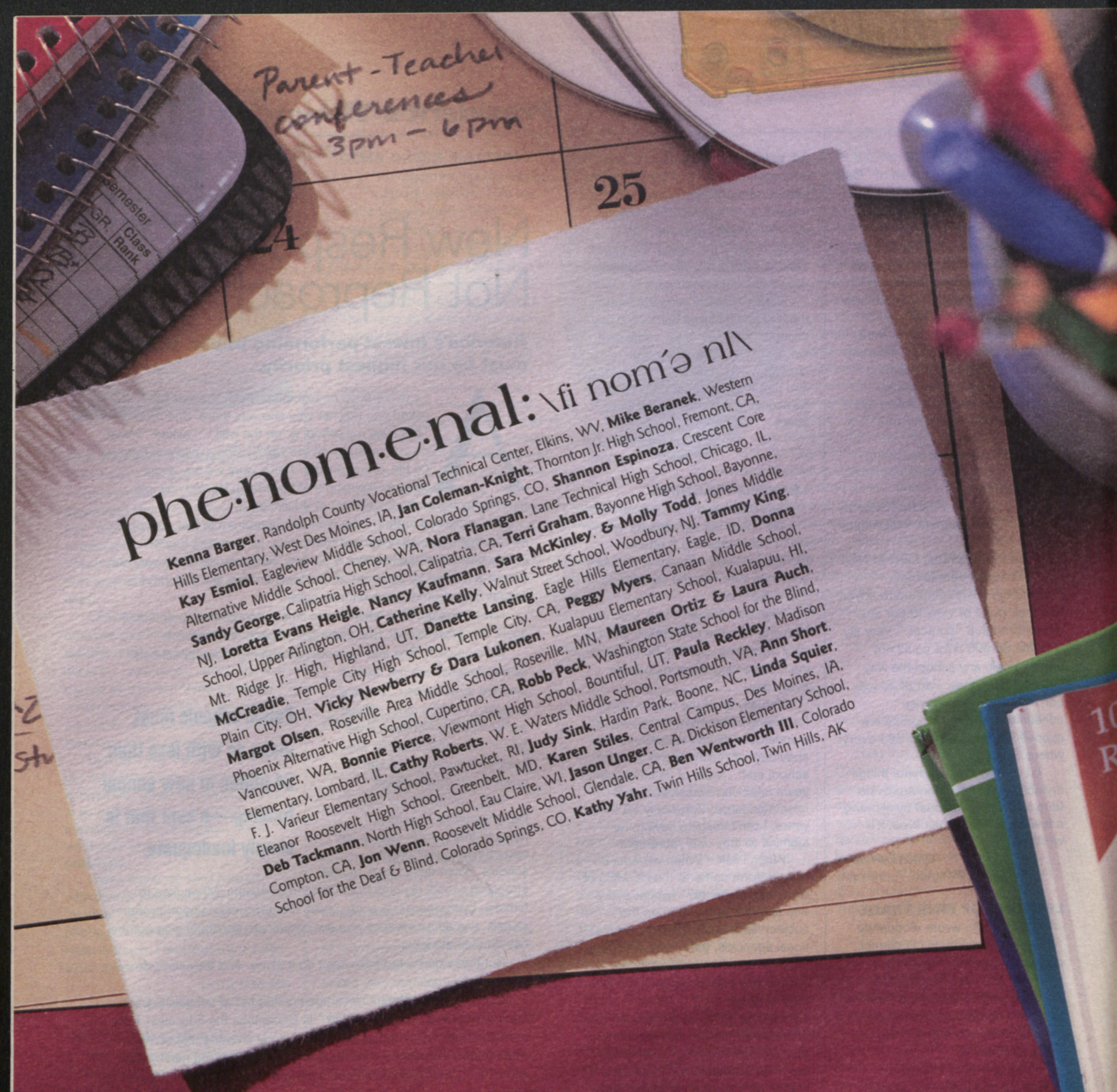
How do they do it? Well, it turns out that these schools share a number of traits in common: high standards and expectations, increased instructional time for reading and math, major investments in staff professional development, and a strong emphasis on parental involvement. In addition, these schools use tests not to punish, but to identify students who need extra assistance.

Interestingly, the education reform legislation passed by Congress in December is full of excellent ideas and initiatives. For example, it requires low-performing schools to ensure that 100 percent of their teachers are "highly qualified" within four years. The problem is that the legislation utterly fails to provide sufficient funding to make good on this promise.

Some in Congress argue that there is simply not enough money to fully fund reform. Funny how Congress has no difficulty finding $1.3 trillion for tax cuts or $20 billion to bail out the airline industry, but public schools must make do with less than $4 billion in new annual funding—a sum that is simply inadequate.

In poor communities across America, teachers and other school staff struggle heroically to make "leave no child behind" something more than a hollow slogan. They deserve our respect. They also deserve adequate resources to get the job done.

Comments? E-mail Bob Chase at BobChase@nea.org.



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Natural Chemistry with Technology

A Maryland teacher never thought she'd be turning technology loose in *her* classroom.

BY ALMA COGGS SMITH

I never thought I'd be leading the chorus singing the praises of using technology in the classroom. But here I am, doing just that.

Although I recognized over the past several years that technology was becoming increasingly important in all types of fields, I didn't see that I needed to use too much technology in my own high school classroom.

Still, last spring, I was curious enough about what technology could do for me and my students that I decided to enroll in the Intel Teach to the Future program.

This program provides 40 hours of professional development in 10 four-hour modules, plus 20 hours of take-home activities to supplement the training. Each participant creates student samples, evaluation tools, and support materials for one curricular unit. The unit's objectives are matched against state frameworks and content standards.

What I liked best about the training is that it didn't seem like training, and it sure wasn't like most professional development courses I've gone to over my two decades of teaching.

No, this was a real learning experience, taught by teachers who were trained in technology, helping other teachers who weren't, to use some new tools to help them teach. The tools include integrating multimedia into daily lesson plans and using Internet search engines to find information.

One of the stipulations of the Intel training is that I agree to train other teachers. This gave me the chance to help 13 other teachers get a little more comfortable with technology during training last fall. What a great class it was.

One teacher developed instructional multimedia presentations that explain how to build a mousetrap racecar, a catapult, and water bottle rockets. Another teacher and her students included their own beautiful drawings of the monsters of Beowulf in their multimedia presentations. We all learned so much.

While the technology has helped me, what really counts is how it's energized my students.

I think my chemistry curriculum holds more interest and fascination for students now. For instance, after studying glucose metabolism in the human body, students began studying diabetes by searching for information about the disease on the Internet and using appropriate software to develop presentations about the various types of diabetes.

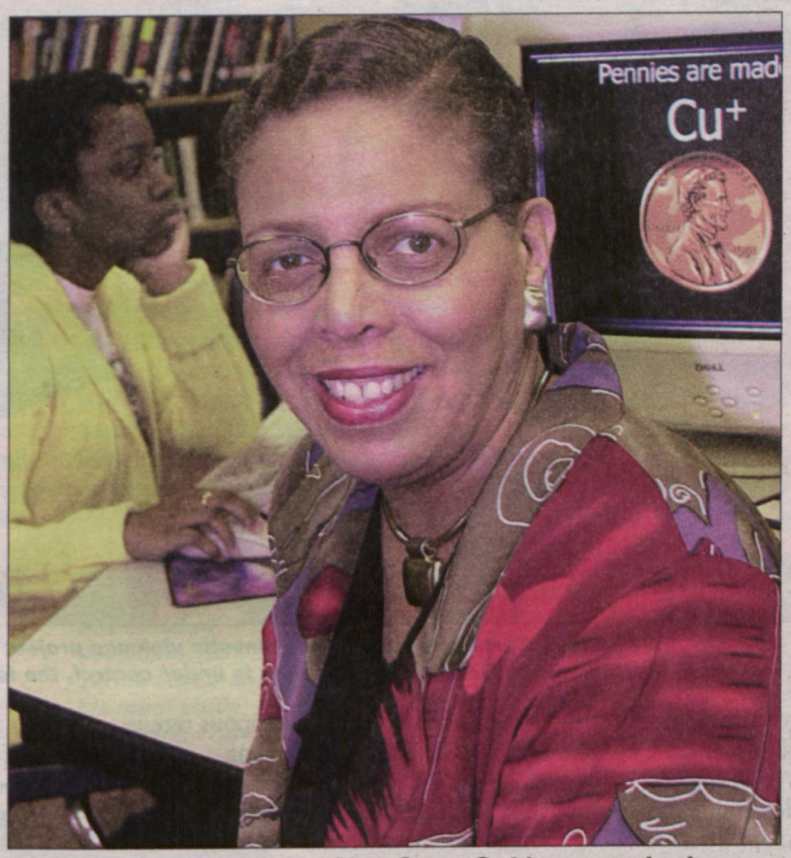
Last November, when the anthrax scare struck our area, we discussed students' fears and concerns. Some students developed informative multimedia presentations about the cause, transmission, and treatment of anthrax. They presented their findings to the school Parent-Teacher-Student Association and two computer conventions.

My students are now willing to spend more time studying a given research topic. They're reading more and enjoying it. They're utilizing tools that make researching, writing, and revising easier. I think they're more creative now that they've learned some technological tricks. They share more ideas with each other. Now, when students receive research assignments they become the "producers" of the project, infusing their own creativity and individuality into the synthesis of their very own multimedia production.

I have witnessed the delight in their eyes as they patiently search for pictures that will embellish their presentation. Incorporating multimedia into my curriculum has motivated my students to become engaged and active learners. There are few, if any, discipline problems.

I recently came across a statistic that only 33 percent of teachers reported feeling well prepared to use technology and that only about 20 percent of money spent on training is directed toward staff development.

The Intel training program addresses both issues, benefitting teachers and students. I'm hooked on technology. ✔



Sandy Schaeffer

Maryland chemistry teacher Alma Coggs Smith touts technology now that she sees its application.

Alma Coggs Smith teaches chemistry at Surrattsville High School about 20 miles from Washington, D.C. Write her at almas@pgcps.org. For details on the Intel Teach to the Future program, go to www.intel.com/education/teach.

We spend about 14 cents a copy to get each issue of *NEA Today* into the hands of NEA's 2.6 million members eight times a year, so we pay a lot of attention to what's going on with the U.S. Postal Service (USPS).

Our mailing costs could go up considerably if the Postal Service Board of Governors approves a proposed 12 to 15 percent rate hike for periodicals.

Bill Fischer
editor

The recent anthrax scare and the related expenses that the Postal Service has incurred for the cost of tightening mail security have added to the size of its billion-dollar budget deficit. Congress did appropriate some $700 million to offset at least some of these extra expenses. The USPS still estimates it will lose somewhere around a billion dollars without significant reduction of costs and increases in fees.

The latest thinking from experts who watch over postal issues for us is that the 12 to 15 percent rate hike will take effect this spring. We're hoping that the May issue of *NEA Today* will already be in the mail by the time the rate hike kicks in, saving the Association thousands of dollars.

While we can't control things like postal rate hikes, there are things we are doing to reduce postal expenses.

For one, copies of *NEA Today* are commingled for mailing with other commercial publications from the same printer to qualify for reduced postal rates. Copies of the magazine are also sorted to 9-digit zip codes, which also saves postal costs.

Controlling other costs, especially the cost of paper and printing, also yields savings that can help offset postal hikes. A few years ago, we switched to inkjetting mailing addresses onto each copy, thus eliminating the extra step of preparing paper labels and attaching them in the binding process.

We'll continue to stay current with other potential money-saving techniques.

Bill Fischer

Recipe for a Great

- ✔ Empower teachers
- ✔ Add 'Small Learning Communities'
- ✔ Simmer five years

Photos by Reed Hoffmann

Charlene Carter discusses her domestic violence project in teacher David Oland's Women's Studies class. Now that discipline is under control, the focus at Wyandotte High is on learning.

Five years ago, Wyandotte High School in Kansas City, Kansas was in desperate straits. To determine that, you didn't need sophisticated assessment instruments. You just had to follow your nose.

"We had kids urinating on the radiators. We had locker fires," says social studies teacher David Oland. "We had a staff that was beaten down."

Teachers proposed many changes at this low-income school, but nothing happened. "I would leave faculty meetings and burst into tears," recalls art teacher Patty Kamper. "When I introduced myself to our new principal, I said, 'I'm Patty Kamper and this is my last year here.'" There was talk of shutting the school down.

But in the last five years, Wyandotte has engineered a remarkable revival. Attendance is up. The dropout rate is falling. Test scores are rising.

That's big news, especially given the chasm in achievement between low-and high-income students that is one of the nation's most intractable problems.

NEA is working to narrow that achievement gap through its Priority Schools Initiative, which in part spreads the know-how around about how some low-income schools are pulling themselves up. At a recent Priority Schools conference in Atlanta, presentations by Wyandotte teachers attracted high interest.

So what happened at Wyandotte High?

In 1997, under its new principal, Wyandotte launched a school reform program called "First Things First," which stresses seven requirements for school improvement, among them high standards and stable adult relationships for students, and autonomy for educators.

Many of these are featured in other reform models, and talking about them doesn't always lead to real change. But Wyandotte had another critical ingredient: a principal with genuine respect for frontline educators, and he was joined the following year by a like-minded new superintendent. They gave Wyandotte educators real autonomy and support to put the high school on its feet.

Patty Kamper didn't leave. "[The principal] came to us and said, 'Design a school you would want to send your children to.'

"Those were tough days, but it was a heady feeling to know that we could really make things happen," she says.

The 1200-student high school was divided into eight mini-schools called "Small Learning Communities," each with a different theme. Oland and Kamper's community stresses visual arts

School

and technology.

Teams of eight to ten teachers stay with 150 students throughout their high school years—which, at first, Oland didn't like. "I lost my niche, teaching economics, sociology, and psychology to upperclassmen. I hadn't had it long and it was taken away from me. I had lots of special education kids whom I didn't know how to handle. I was depressed—walking down the hall with my head down."

But gradually, Oland found that his small learning community was becoming less like a traditional high school and more like a big family, all for the better.

Last year, the family was joined by English teacher Brian Dolezal, 23 years old at the time and fresh out of college. Often in low-income schools, new teachers are overwhelmed by discipline problems and isolated from their colleagues. Dolezal's experience has been completely different. "I wasn't just dropped off in my classroom," he says. "They really take care of me." (And when Dolezal's winter coat was stolen—not at school—he ended up with *three* replacements, thanks to three separate staffers.)

Wyandotte's teaching teams—teachers and support professionals—meet for planning and professional development on Wednesday afternoons. Students get out two hours early. Community groups have stepped forward to offer teen programs during that time.

Each team decides what problems to tackle during the Wednesday sessions and what outside help may be needed. At first, discipline was the major focus. The close personal relationships in the small communities helped, but they weren't enough. The visual arts team devised a system that begins with peer counseling and ends with a meeting for the student and the whole team before the ultimate sanction of suspension, which these days is rarely used.

Now that classroom management is no longer a nightmare, Kamper says, the planning sessions have moved on to the real point of the enterprise: instruction.

Wyandotte is at the leading edge of changes taking place throughout the school system. All of the city's high schools are now switching to small learning communities.

Respect for staff led to adoption of "interest-based" negotiating between the district and the educators' union, NEA-Kansas City, Kansas. That means, says Association President Sandra Butler, the two sides no longer assume their interests are opposed.

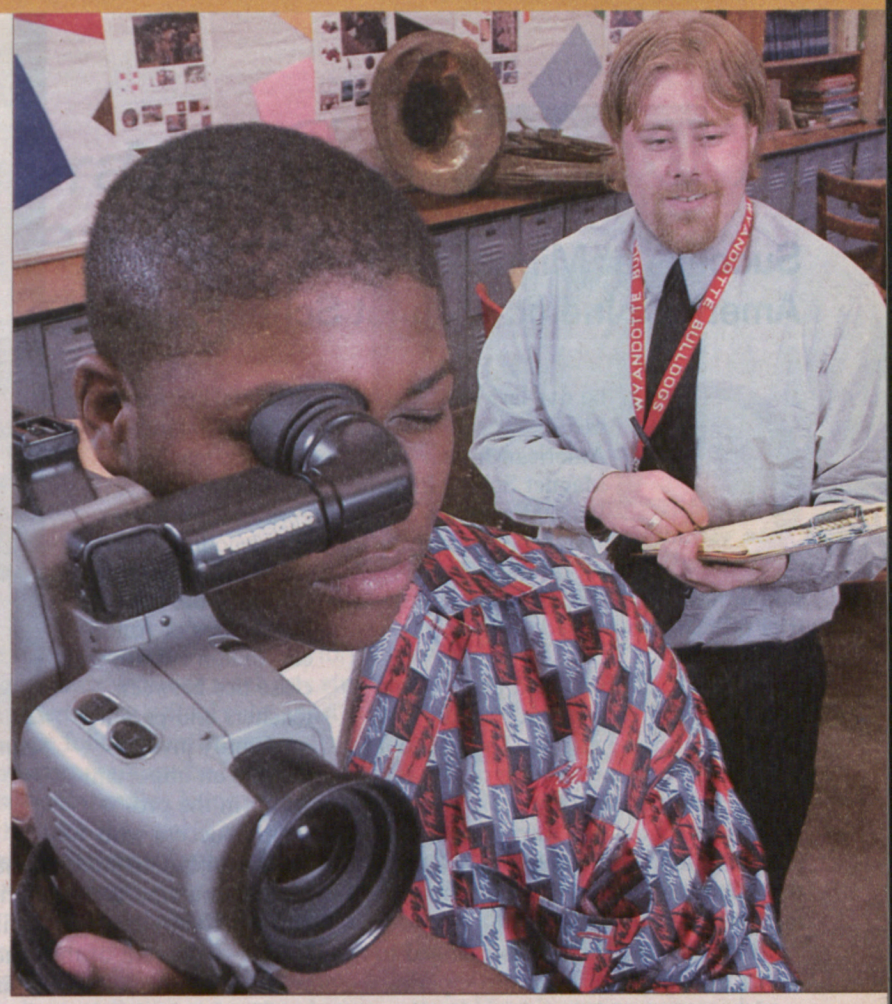
Important issues are open to discussion even if the state bargaining law does not require management to talk about them. "In the old days, if we wanted to talk about paperwork or class size, the other side would say, 'That's non-negotiable,' and the subject would be closed," says Butler. Union and management are now working out a memorandum of understanding on paperwork, she reports.

Four years ago, the Association invited top administrators to the NEA's annual Challenge of Change retreat in Colorado Springs, and even paid their way. The Colorado discussions were so useful that administrators and union leaders have gone every year since.

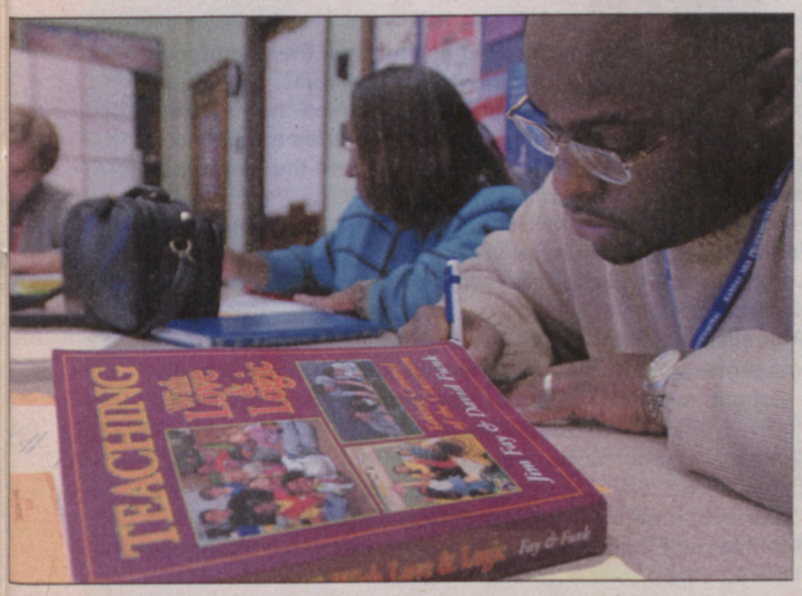
Last year, they charged straight into the difficult topic of how to hold on to good teachers. A jointly conducted poll showed one of the top reasons teachers leave is poor student conduct. With an NEA grant, the administration and the union then co-sponsored a "community conversation" on student behavior, with educators, parents, and other community members.

Kansas City, Kansas still has a long way to go, but at Wyandotte High it's easy to tell this school is on the rise. You can use sophisticated assessment instruments, or just your nose: No more smelly radiators. And in the courtyard, students and faculty are actually growing flowers. ✔

—Alain Jehlen



Tyronn Ollie is the cameraman in a student team producing an ethnic history documentary for teacher Brian Dolezal.



Faculty meet on Wednesdays for professional development. Jarius Jones and his team study "Teaching With Love and Logic."

Success by the Numbers

Educators at Wyandotte High School know their school is succeeding even without looking at numbers. Nevertheless, they've got the stats to back themselves up.

ATTENDANCE:
1997–98: 72% **2000–01: 80%**

GRADUATION RATE:
1998: 50% **2001: 70%**

TEST SCORES:
Often, schools that claim to have lifted their scores turn out to have done it by selecting high-scoring students to begin with. But at Wyandotte, with fewer dropouts, there are more students from low-scoring groups taking senior class tests. So scores could be expected to fall. Instead, while still low, the scores are rising.

For example: Seniors reaching the national 50th percentile mark in math:
2000: 16% **2001: 23%**

Source: Wyandotte High School

A Different Drum

Success at Minnesota's American Indian Magnet School

One day last May, staff members at the American Indian Magnet School in St. Paul, Minnesota watched anxiously as reporters and television crews, along with top school district officials, converged on their school.

The staff had been told there would be a press conference, but they did not know what the news was. Their school was on "probation" because of low test scores. Just the previous week, teachers at another school had learned that many of them would be removed. So the American Indian Magnet School faculty feared the worst.

But worried expressions changed to smiles and laughter when the superintendent announced that this school's scores were up so sharply that it was being taken off the probation list a year ahead of the target date. And when reporters asked students what was behind the turnaround, they all talked about the literacy program.

That felt extra sweet to kindergarten teacher Julie Hutcheson because the staff had fought hard for this program, resisting pressure from district administrators.

The district had wanted all low-scoring schools to choose one of three school reform models. But American Indian Magnet School teachers were using a different approach called "Balanced Literacy," which they felt was effective and a good fit with their students' culture.

With Balanced Literacy, teachers emphasize both appreciating stories and decoding individual words. The version they use includes big dollops of American Indian culture and close ties between teachers and parents.

Family involvement is an important factor in the program's success with American Indian students, says Hutcheson, who is an American Indian herself (Keeweenaw Bay Ojibwe). About 40 percent of the school's 350 students are American Indians.

The faculty has been deeply involved in developing and adapting this program. In contrast, Hutcheson notes the program favored by the district administration was "highly prescriptive," telling teachers in great detail what they should do. It also would have cost $60,000.

The teachers at this school, says Hutcheson, are all well prepared to do their work. "We don't need a 'teacher-proof' program," she insists. Even the newest members of the staff can benefit much more from mentoring than from a set of instructions.

Other St. Paul schools also resisted the district's narrow range of program choices, and several hundred teachers organized by Education Minnesota's St. Paul local showed up at a board meeting to ask for more flexibility. American Indian parents told the board how much they liked Balanced Literacy.

The district allowed Hutcheson and her colleagues to go ahead with their approach—but warned that they would be held accountable if scores did not come up.

By spring 2001, one year after the contentious school board meeting, reading scores had risen faster than anyone had expected. New test data document sharp improvement in both reading and math.

Other evidence indicates that these children are becoming more literate in the full sense of the word—beyond test scores. School librarian Marnie Pershke has noticed a jump in the number of books children check out.

"Our students are reading for enjoyment," says Hutcheson, "not just because they have to." ✔

Larry Salzman

Julie Hutcheson says acknowledging American Indian culture and a Balanced Literacy program have helped bring success to the American Indian Magnet School.

PRIORITY SCHOOLS

Low-Performing Schools a Priority for NEA

The NEA's Priority Schools Initiative is a long-range, multi-pronged campaign to close the achievement gap for students who traditionally do not succeed in school.

Some schools face serious and systemic challenges that undermine teaching and learning. In virtually all of them, the great majority of students are from low-income families, often minorities, and many are burdened with social problems. A high proportion come to school unprepared to learn. Some are immigrants not fluent in English.

On top of these daunting problems, schools in low-income neighborhoods often have fewer financial resources than those in wealthier areas, since property taxes are a major component of school spending in America.

Staff burnout is rife, and turnover is high in these schools. As a result, many classrooms in low-income schools are led by inexperienced teachers.

So, children who need more from the schools actually get less.

Public opinion polls indicate that most Americans do not blame public school educators for inequalities in educational achievement. But the public does look to educators to do something about the situation (see Inside Scoop, page 27).

NEA's efforts to help low-performing schools run the gamut from political action to organizing better mentoring programs. One critical function of the Priority Schools campaign is to spread the news on how some schools are beating the odds. These stories are based on the wealth of knowledge that NEA members have on the best practices for helping all children learn.

- For more on NEA's Priority Schools campaign, including where to get help and ways you can help, visit the NEA Web site at www.nea.org/issues/lowperf/priorityschools, or contact Linda Bacon at lbacon@nea.org.
- NEA publishes a Priority Schools kit that spells out how teachers, support professionals, student teachers, and higher education members can get involved. Copies can be obtained from the NEA Urban Initiatives office at 202/822-7376.
- To learn more about Wyandotte High School in Kansas City, Kansas, E-mail David Oland at odog@kctera.net.
- For information on the American Indian Magnet School in St. Paul, Minnesota, E-mail Julie Hutcheson at jhutch1617@aol.com.

Is zero tolerance a good idea for school discipline and safety?

ANN BANKS ***is the social studies department head at South Garland High School in Garland, Texas. She has taught for 28 years and is editor of the Garland Education Association newsletter,*** **GEA Voice.**

yes

A few years ago, a senior in our district was caught in the school parking lot with beer in the back of his pickup. The punishment for possession of alcohol on campus was expulsion. His parents hired an attorney and appealed to our school board. Their argument, of course, was that the beer was not his. Instead of accepting the reality that their child had an alcohol problem, they made excuses. They spent over $1,000, and they won. Our trustees ruled in favor of the student, and he was reinstated.

Six weeks later, he went on a band trip and was caught with alcohol. He was sent home and expelled from school. His parents finally had to face facts and could begin to help their child.

Things were different when I started teaching in the 1970s. Today, many students and their parents blame everyone else for what happens. Very few accept responsibility for their actions.

Over the years, I have seen a major shift in the way our administration deals with students. The push is toward treating parents and children as clients of the school district, and the client is to be pleased. Parents are appeased to keep complaints from reaching a higher level.

Parents want order in the schools as long as their child is not the one punished. A previous principal used to insist that there is an exception to every rule. In that case, there are no rules.

An important part of my job as a social studies teacher is to instill responsibility and citizenship in my students. Citizens should be responsible for their actions. Society has made laws to ensure that the government treats all people equally. When the government does not apply the laws equally, that is discrimination. When we make exceptions to school rules, that is unfair.

Our state recently revised our juvenile justice system by separating disruptive students from the rest of the population.

We have in-building suspension for minor infractions (language, tardies). We have an alternative campus for major violations (alcohol, drugs, fighting), and a countywide facility for students who have been found guilty of felonies. If our minor rules were enforced consistently, fewer students would break the major ones, because more students would realize that there are consequences to their actions.

The school should maintain zero tolerance for serious infractions. Children need to learn that rules are to be followed. ✔

RICHARD EHRET, SR. ***is a social studies teacher at Whitmer High School in Toledo, Ohio. He has taught for 23 years. He chairs his local Association's committee raising money for the OEA-NEA Fund for Children and Public Education.***

no

It has been said that "zero tolerance" policies teach our students that school rules must be followed or the consequences must be faced. We are told that this helps prepare them for the "world out there," which has no tolerance for those who break its rules.

Let's examine the world. If a person gets in trouble with the law and is brought to court, the judge usually is not restricted to a mandatory sentence. The judge can consider mitigating circumstances. We have all read about cases where mandatory sentencing brought about a miscarriage of justice. I don't think we want to bring injustice into our schools.

School officials, like judges, must be free to judge students by their motives, mitigating circumstances, and other factors that influenced the behavior. In a critical decision about a student's future, no pertinent information should be excluded from consideration. But under zero tolerance, if you violate the policy, you are out. How is anyone supposed to get a fair hearing in such a case?

Zero tolerance also sends a message to our students that it is okay to be intolerant for a good cause. As a government teacher, I have come to abhor the attitude of some groups in our society that it's their way or no way. Whether it is religious righteousness, political fanaticism, or even fanaticism about some idea that is "The Answer" to all the problems in education, it scares me to death. I see countries torn apart and people killed or turned into refugees by other people who refuse to tolerate opposing beliefs. This is why my morning prayer is "God save us from the righteous."

Zero tolerance, like mandatory sentencing, is a knee-jerk reaction to fear spawned by events such as the Columbine school shootings or September 11. We got hit, we got scared, and we're not gonna take it anymore. In the case of September 11, we are so intent on getting the terrorists that we are even willing to legislate away the Bill of Rights and its guarantee of due process of law for everyone including foreigners. What good is our nation to us without our freedoms?

It is true that schools sometimes violate their own policies just to get parents "off their backs." I don't like to see this kind of bowing and scraping. But I wouldn't want to remove the right of school officials to bend rules when doing so is in the best interests of the student. Sometimes it isn't enough just to be right. We need to be "right on" in our decisions about the lives of our students. ✔

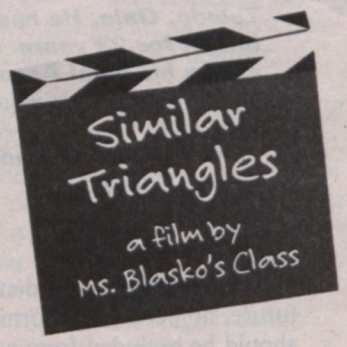
Amy Ning

What's Your Opinion?

Is zero tolerance a good idea for school discipline and safety?
To vote, visit our Web site at www.nea.org/neatoday and see the results instantly.

Due to a technical problem, we are unable to report the tally from last month's debate. It will be published next month.

Learning. Cleverly



How do you get a classroom full of restless kids interested in geometry? Pique their interest and their enthusiasm with Apple's revolutionary iMovie.™

"Do you know how to tell the height of something if you can't reach the top?" Maria Blasko's students learn a valuable lesson in geometry.

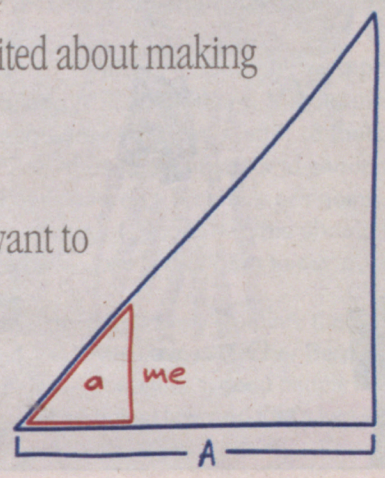
Maria Blasko, a math teacher in East Palo Alto, California, uses iMovie to take lessons out of the textbook and give them real-world applications. "With the 'Similar Triangles' movie, I took a concept that can be very hard for students to grasp in the classroom environment and took it outside, to get the students involved in the process. Instead of listening to me

By filming the "Similar Triangles" lesson, Maria Blasko brings new life to an old subject.

disguised as a movie.

iMovie uses simple drag-and-drop technology. So you can focus on teaching, not editing.

tell them about the relationship between similar triangles of differing size, they experienced it. And because we were filming the process they really focused on the assignment and became excited about making the movie. The best part is that once the lesson is done the students want to watch it again and again. So it really reinforces what they've learned." In short, iMovie, combined with inspired teaching, is a formula for student success. To see how Maria and other teachers are using iMovie to energize lessons and connect to their students, call 1-800-800-APPL or visit www.apple.com/teachimovie.



Ms. Blasko built a stronger relationship with her students by combining a passion for teaching with the power of iMovie.

Think different.

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'Jail Terrorists, Not

In Middletown, New Jersey, 228 teachers and secretaries are jailed for striking. The story behind this story: 'plain old union busting.'

Middletown NEA members accepted proposals to send their contract issues to binding arbitration. The school board rejected those proposals and demanded that the court jail all strikers.

Photos: AP/Wide World

Envision this bad dream: You've violated no state statute, yet you're sentenced for "contempt of court" by a state judge whom no one elected. You're handcuffed and driven to jail, where you're placed in a hot, windowless, 15-by-20-foot room with 36 other people.

Your dinner, delivered in milk crates, consists of hot milk and mushy bologna sandwiches, with crushed lemon cookies pushed into the bread.

This nightmare was *reality* for New Jersey Education Association/NEA member Lorraine Pron, one of 228 striking Middletown Township teachers and school secretaries who were jailed in December, from one to five days. The charge against them: violating a state judge's back-to-work order.

"You turn over all your rights in jail. When you're thirsty at home, you just go get a glass of water. But in jail you're not really sure what you're drinking," shudders Pron, a seventh grade language arts teacher at Bayshore Middle School. "I was completely shocked by this experience."

Shock. The Middletown school board carefully calculated the effect that incarceration would have on law-abiding, middle-class educators like Lorraine Pron. But it did not predict the shock wave this mass jailing would send around the world.

"During the strike, I received 690 E-mails from ordinary teachers everywhere, from Japan to Britain," reports Diane Swaim, president of the 1,006-member Middletown Township Education Association. "The basic message in each note was, *'What kind of country sends its teachers to jail?'"*

It was clear from the start of the 2001 contract talks that the school board, which had unilaterally imposed an inferior contract on MTEA members in 1998, wasn't in the mood for genuine bargaining. Negotiations produced little or no progress on the issues.

"We expected the board would follow the 1998 process again," says Swaim, an eighth grade civics teacher at Bayshore Middle School. "They would take the talks all the way to the last required step, fact finding, and then impose a contract. Our membership said, 'We are never going there again.'"

MTEA members struck on November 29, almost five months after the previous contract expired.

New Jersey has no statute prohibiting public employee strikes, but that didn't stop the Middletown school board from requesting a public-safety injunction from the state Superior Court. The board specifically requested that the strikers be jailed, fined, fired, and barred from re-employment.

To head off the worst, the judge proposed two successive options to settle the dispute: first, binding arbitration of all issues; then, binding arbitration of the most contentious issue, employee health care payments, while talks continued on other issues.

The union, which had already softened its bargaining position, quickly agreed to both of the judge's proposals. The board rejected them and demanded that the judge jail the strikers.

Throughout the first week of December, striking MTEA members were called alphabetically in front of judges and asked if they would comply with the back-to-work order.

"This isn't about money. It's about *respect*, about treating educators fairly."

—Middletown Local President Diane Swaim

The answer of many: *"Your honor, I will not go back to work until I have a negotiated and signed contract."*

Among the strikers shipped to the Monmouth County Correctional Institution were people with disabilities and single parents without adequate child care support at home. Rallies were held to support the strikers, and protesters waved signs with messages like "Jail Terrorists, Not Teachers."

Board rejects settlement

After a week of this ugliness, two state-appointed mediators presented a recommended settlement. MTEA leaders recognized that this document did not give either side everything it wanted, but that it was a fair settlement.

MTEA accepted the settlement document's terms at 6:15 a.m. on Friday, December 7. But some three hours later, the board refused to sign it.

MTEA informed the court that it had met demands placed on the union and agreed to a settlement. Therefore, it argued, Association members should be freed from jail.

The judge agreed to release MTEA

Teachers'

members and announced the appointment of a court-appointed mediator, charged with responsibility to report bad-faith bargaining to the judge.

Union members returned to work on Monday, December 10.

The Main Issue: Respect

The Middletown story isn't just about arrests of educators, and it won't end with a signed contract.

"This is not about money," stresses Swain. "It's about respect, about treating educators fairly and professionally. And it's about plain old union busting."

Behind this story is a school board that has denied Middletown's 17 schools, serving 10,500 students, both needed resources and moral support.

This district is an amalgam of 12 suburban townlets, lacking a real town center and a strong community identity. Its residents have a too-tenuous connection to the schools and have repeatedly voted down education budgets.

The school board *could* meet this challenge by getting to know its staff and campaigning for needed programs. Instead, it keeps a cool distance—while keeping a sharp eye on its $5 million budget surplus and boasting about its low per-pupil expenditure.

Spending constraints and board micromanagement have sent many good administrators packing. The district has had six superintendents since 1995.

MTEA members at Bayshore Middle School paint a grim picture of what this board has done to school programs and staff morale. They speak of:

■ **Callousness after September 11.** Middletown lost 34 residents in the World Trade Center blast, yet school staffers were left to deal with students without any thanks or guidance—aside from a brief memo from central office.

"Two students in my class lost their fathers on September 11," says Diane Swaim. "*We* were the ones who filled the gaps and made things right for these children. I downloaded stuff from the NEA Web site and faxed it to all the schools. Without the union there would have been no advice for staff."

■ **No real staff training.** The Middletown district refuses to adequately fund either professional development or mentor training.

"You have to scratch and claw to get a professional development day to do anything," laments English teacher Gail Ritter, who chairs the district's professional development committee.

"With mentoring, you need common planning time and time to visit the rooms, so the mentee can come and see the way you do things, and vice versa," Ritter adds. "But the district won't make any concessions, because it'll mean hiring substitutes."

Worse yet, Ritter charges, the district has "no intention of implementing" a state-mandated professional development plan that was drafted by her panel. "We intend to notify the state and county that we've resigned as a committee," she steams.

■ **Destruction of Middletown's vocational education program.** Bayshore Middle School staffers report that the district has gutted its industrial arts and home economics programs.

"All the hands-on kinds of programs are being eliminated," says Phil Couch, a former shop teacher who went back to get a master's in special education. "This means that the middle school philosophy of exploration and exposure to a wide variety of programs has been effectively abolished."

■ **Pay inequities.** School secretaries point out they are slotted into pay grades that do not reflect the value of their jobs. "I'm charged with responsibility for every student in the school's records, yet I'm making less than one of the groundskeepers," says guidance secretary Tracy Laliberte.

Heroes & Zeroes

Dave Winans

Displaying flowers from a union supporter are Middletown NEA members Marianne Waltsak, Lorraine Pron, Carol Karalewich, and Jennifer Capraun. All teach at Bayshore Middle School.

▲ **Middletown Township Education Association President Diane Swaim is "astounded by how much stronger individual MTEA members have become" as a result of the December jailings.**

It's strength drawn from solidarity. "I know I can trust my colleagues, who are now my very close friends," says seventh grade language arts teacher Lorraine Pron. "I can look at each one of of these people and know what they're about."

▼ **Right after demanding the imprisonment of striking MTEA members, Middletown school board negotiators wrote in a letter to the community: "Each of us is dismayed and saddened that some of our children's teachers are going to jail. It was never our intention that this should happen and we have done everything in our power to avoid it."**

▲ **"I try to teach my students that this country is fair and just," Middletown teacher Barbara Guenther told a judge. "Sometimes, good people have to stand up to fight an unjust law, and that's just what I'm doing."**

Signs of Solidarity

MTEA members know they don't face this school board alone.

They're backed by other New Jersey Education Association locals—which rallied at candlelight vigils as they faced the judges—and NJEA leaders and staff, who have coordinated legal defense, strike organization, and press outreach.

Supporters of jailed strikers stage a candlelight vigil in front of the county courthouse.

They've also got the full backing of NEA. "Pick a fight with any of us and you've picked a fight with all of us. It's called *solidarity*," NEA President Bob Chase said at a support rally in front of the Monmouth County Courthouse on December 5.

"We will not stand for teachers and secretaries being thrown into prison," Chase stressed. "We are in this fight for however long it takes." ✔

—Dave Winans

Retiring on Next to Nothing

NEA campaigns for repeal of two Social Security rules that reduce retired educators to poverty.

Back in the late 1980s, a colleague warned Maine teacher Junita Drisko that she'd "be sorry" if she didn't pay attention to two provisions in the Social Security law that could reduce her retirement income.

"I was too busy to listen," recalls Drisko, who teaches English and journalism at Bangor High School. "I was very preoccupied with creating lesson plans and correcting papers."

Fast forward to the 2001 NEA Representative Assembly, where Drisko found herself addressing 9,000 fellow delegates about these same two provisions, the Government Pension Offset and the Windfall Elimination Provision.

Drisko's passionate speech prompted the delegates to pass a new business item mandating that NEA "develop and financially support a grassroots coalition" to educate state and local affiliates on the need to "work toward the elimination of the GPO and WEP."

That campaign, now underway, is focused on the passage of companion bills S. 1523 and H.R. 2638, which would amend the Social Security Act to repeal the GPO and WEP.

Because of these two provisions, Drisko told RA delegates, educators and other public employees in 15 states who do not pay into the Social Security system are "often reduced to living in poverty during their retirement years."

To drive that point home, Drisko related the true story of a Maine teacher, "Julia," who fell victim to the Windfall Elimination Provision. The WEP reduces the earned Social Security benefits of an individual who also receives a public pension from a job not covered by Social Security.

"Julia worked in restaurants for 20 years before she went back to school to become a teacher at the age of 53. She taught for 15 years," Drisko told the delegates. "The Windfall Elimination Provision reduced her $525 Social Security monthly benefit to $152. Medicare takes $45."

Julia, who gets a small Maine state pension, is left with just $431 after other essential deductions. "Her husband receives $700 a month as a Social Security benefit," Drisko noted. "But if he predeceases Julia, the Government Pension Offset will prevent her from receiving any survivor benefits."

That's because the GPO reduces a public employee's Social Security spousal or survivor benefits by an amount equal to two-thirds of his or her public pension.

The GPO and WEP aren't simple to explain. They were adopted by Congress in the 1980s as a snap solution to problems such as pension "double dipping" abuses and budget deficits.

But these provisions are easier to grasp when one understands that the wrong people, often low-income women like Julia, are hurt by them.

Junita Drisko has launched an NEA campaign that will benefit all retirees.

"We need to tell stories about how these provisions affect people and how they penalize people for public service."

—NEA-Retired President Jim Sproul

And for NEA members, the hurt is massive. The GPO and WEP affect at least one-third of America's education workforce, concentrated in 15 "non-Social Security" states, literally from Maine to Alaska. The list also includes highly populated states like California, Massachusetts, Ohio, and Texas.

According to the Congressional Budget Office, the GPO alone reduces benefits for some 300,000 individuals

Basics for Beginners

How To Take On The Pension Offset

If you want to work for total repeal of the Government Pension Offset and Windfall Elimination Provision, here's some advice from two Maine NEA activists:

- **Tell your friends, family, and colleagues about how the GPO and WEP help impoverish public employees.** And don't forget to clue in other public workers. "One legislator, a retired state transportation department employee, told me, 'I'm working on getting my Social Security quarters,'" recalls physical education/health teacher Sue Shaw. "I told him, 'I've got bad news for you.' We need to educate more people like him."
- **If you've been hurt by the Government Pension Offset or Windfall Elimination Provision, tell your story to the press and members of Congress.** English teacher Junita Drisko teaches journalism, so she knows that "so many stories bring an issue to life." She and other Maine activists have learned that "we're not going to win repeal of these provisions by getting too academic and difficult to understand."

THE BOTTOM LINE

STUDY CIRCLES: Many schools and communities are partnering to close achievement gaps through the use of study circles. A new guide tells how successful circles work. www.studycircles.org/pages/educationhome.html.

COLLEGE GRANTS: In 1999-2000, 23 percent of college undergraduates received federal grants, 16.7 percent received institutional grants, and 13.6 percent received state grants. http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2002/quarterly/fall/q4-4.asp.

ARAB AMERICANS: Arab-American students are increasingly subject to negative racial stereotyping. New resources are available to provide such students with a more supportive environment. http://eric-web.tc.columbia.edu/digests/dig142.html.

DECISION MAKING: New research says steering young people away from isolation by involving them in organizational governance is important to both youth and community development. www.nonprofitquarterly.org/youth/rejectingisolation.php.

Bob Delong

by more than $3,600 a year.

Junita Drisko, who's treasurer/membership coordinator of the Bangor Education Association, points out that "All kinds of educators out there have no idea of the impact the GPO and WEP have on their retirement."

That's less the case in Maine, where Sue Shaw, a physical education/health teacher from Ellsworth High School, travels the state to make presentations on the dangers of the GPO and WEP.

"I'm telling people that they may not get the Social Security benefits they planned on," says Shaw. "If you work in a non-Social Security state and get a letter from Social Security saying you have your 'quarters' and will get certain projected benefits when you retire, it does not include the words, *'if you are not on a public pension.'*"

That comes as a shock to the many Maine teachers and ESPs who supplement their modest salaries by working second jobs or owning small businesses, and hope to boost their even more modest state pension by paying into the Social Security system.

Some Mainers react to the bad news about GPO/WEP by delaying retirement into their 70s. Others, sadly, question their career choice after years of teaching. Yet others think twice about entering teaching later in life from other careers, at a time of a teacher shortage.

While affected teachers, ESP, and other public employees—from firefighters to social workers—can't sue the federal government over the GPO and WEP, they can certainly change the law if they get together and put their minds to it.

Junita Drisko's RA new business item is helping jump start that process. Nationwide, NEA is now pressing for total repeal of the GPO and WEP through media outreach, coalition building, grassroots lobbying, and regional training sessions for local leaders and activists.

At a recent training session in Maine, NEA chief lobbyist Diane Shust urged activists to call members of Congress in support of GPO/WEP repeal bills S. 1523 and H.R. 2638, contact President Bush, write to editors, and build coalitions with other unions and retired groups.

An invaluable partner in the drive for total repeal of GPO and WEP will be the growing membership of NEA-Retired.

"We've been working heavily for more than five years to bring this issue to the forefront of the national legislative agenda," says NEA-Retired President Jim Sproul. "Many of our 187,000 members are either directly affected by the GPO or WEP or indirectly affected through a spouse. And don't forget, in this highly mobile society, educators never know when they'll move to a non-Social Security state and be hit by these provisions."

Sproul urges all NEA members, active and retired alike, to bring the GPO/WEP issue to their members of Congress. "Tell stories about how these provisions affect people and how they penalize people for public service," he advises, "and urge your senators and representatives to sign on as cosponsors of S. 1523 and H.R. 2638." ✔

For more about Social Security's GPO and WEP provisions, go to www.nea.org/lac/socsec.

BREAKING NEWS

Congress Reauthorizes ESEA

At press time in December, Congress passed a bill amending and reauthorizing the largest single federal education statute, the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). Authorizing funding of $26.5 billion for Fiscal Year 2002 alone, this 1,184-page law will greatly impact the lives of educators over the life of its term, from FY 2002 to FY 2007.

Before the ESEA bill went to President Bush for his signature, NEA President Bob Chase noted that it "sets out noble goals to raise student achievement and raise accountability, but fails to deliver the support required to help children achieve required standards."

NEA will not oppose the bill, he said, "but we cannot in good conscience support it."

Chase stressed that the new ESEA fails to fulfill a 26-year-old federal promise to pay 40 percent of the cost of special education.

Moreover, NEA is now warning that the bill imposes six years of requirements on schools and cash-strapped state governments with no guarantee of resources after an initial $3.5 billion (20 percent) funding increase in FY 2002.

"While there was a huge federal surplus at the beginning of the fiscal year," notes NEA lobbyist Joel Packer, "we're now back to a budget deficit because of tax cuts, the economic downturn, and the war on terrorism."

In the plus column, however, NEA and its allies did succeed in keeping some damaging proposals out of ESEA, including private tuition vouchers, huge statewide block grants, mandatory testing of current teachers, and the weakening of civil rights protections.

NEA also helped improve ESEA's accountability provisions, making them less punitive, more flexible, and more focused on the achievement of *all* students.

Among ESEA's many features:

- **A 12-year goal to make every student "proficient" in state reading and math tests.** By the 2005-06 school year, every state must administer annual reading and math tests of its own design in grades 3-8, and once between grades 9-12. The tests must be aligned to state standards and must include multiple measures of achievement.

State achievement tests must measure both the performance of a whole school and that of disadvantaged "subgroups," to ensure that no single group of students is allowed to consistently underperform.

A school that displays a lack of "adequate yearly progress" will be placed on a long-term improvement schedule with progressively stronger corrective measures, culminating in school "reconstitution" in the seventh year.

- **Stronger teacher quality provisions.** By the end of the 2005-6 school year, all public school teachers must be both licensed and certified and must demonstrate competency in the subjects they teach. ESEA does, however, contain an explicit ban on any type of federal teacher certification or test.

To further the quality goal, ESEA expands and improves programs for teacher recruitment, retention, mentoring, and training.

- **Stronger civil rights protections.** ESEA bans the federal funding of any education provider that practices bias—based on anything from disability to religion.

(For more on ESEA: www.nea.org/lac.)

PARENTS: As teachers, associations, administrators, and governments struggle with the question of how to improve schools, a new report focuses on the key role parents must play in the effort. www.pewtrusts.com/return_results.cfm?content_item_id=844.

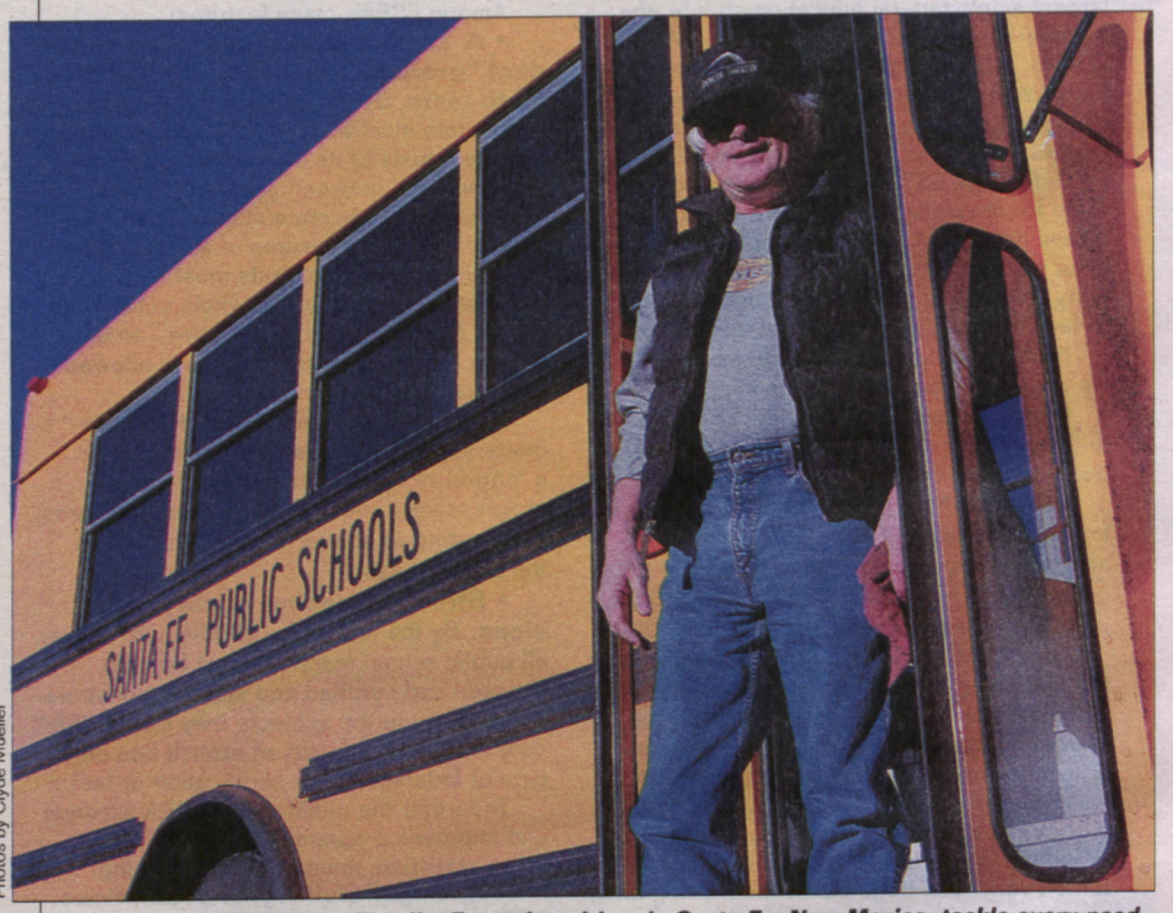
TESTING BACKLASH: Parents, students, and educators in many U.S. states are engaging in protests, boycotts, lobbying, and litigation to oppose or change high-stakes testing. www.aasa.org/publications/sa/2001_12/riede.htm.

PRIVATE SCHOOLS: In the fall of 1999, the U.S. region with the most private elementary and secondary school students was the South, with 31 percent. The West was last with 18 percent. http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2002/quarterly/fall/q4-3.asp.

PRESCRIPTION PUSH: Drug prices are soaring and millions of Americans have no prescription drug coverage. A new kit shows how to get involved in the fight for lower prices and better coverage. www.familiesusa.org/html/drugkit/drugkit.htm.

Serious About Their Jobs—and Kids

Education support professionals have become the fastest-growing membership group in NEA and a force for improving public education.



Photos by Clyde Mueller

ESP activists like Jim Fox, a bus driver in Santa Fe, New Mexico, tackle every need from decent pay to job training. But their top concern is meeting the needs of kids.

Every school day, NEA member Jim Fox sees to it that dozens of kids in Santa Fe, New Mexico ride safely to and from school. But for Fox, a bus driver for Santa Fe Public Schools, that's just where his job—and his service to students and their schools—begins.

Two years ago, Fox noticed that the school district was unconcerned when he and other drivers complained about low pay and wage freezes. Fox decided to start working for change through his local affiliate, and became an NEA-Santa Fe Association representative.

Since then, he's spent countless hours of his own time visiting work sites, talking to members about the benefits of NEA representation, and working through the Association to improve bus drivers' jobs.

Not only has Fox singlehandedly signed up 20 drivers, but he and fellow activists have brought Association membership in their unit up to 60 percent. One payoff: The unit mobilized last year to win 7 percent pay raises when 4 percent was initially offered.

"It was a lesson to me in getting involved," says Fox. "I found out we had a *voice* as bus drivers."

Record ESP Growth

The success of Fox and his coworkers in Santa Fe is anything but isolated. Nationwide, education support professionals—including secretaries, paraeducators, custodians, maintenance employees, bus drivers, food service workers, nurses, and security employees—are joining NEA in record numbers and taking collective action to improve their jobs and their schools.

ESPs are now the fastest-growing membership sector of NEA. During the 2000-01 school year, 21 percent of new NEA members were ESPs. More than 22,000 ESPs joined NEA that year, producing a 6.8 percent increase in ESP membership over 1999-2000.

Forty-one percent of NEA state affiliates had an increase in ESP membership last year, and in five states, ESP membership grew by 14 percent or more.

"ESPs are very serious about their jobs and the children they serve," says Sandra Rice, a UniServ director and ESP liaison in North Carolina, where state ESP membership grew by more than 20 percent last year. "And they are willing to step up to the plate."

According to Rice, support professionals are more eager to get involved in NEA because their diverse jobs are often low-paying, and tough economic times are making it harder than ever for ESPs to support their families.

"I started as an ESP," says Rice, "and I've found that the first problem is trying to define us. Each ESP unit is unique. We're bus drivers, food service workers, and media employees. It's not easy to figure out that this diverse group of workers can have a common voice.

"But when North Carolina's most recent budget cuts hit," Rice notes, "employees saw that the North Carolina Association of Educators/NEA was fighting for them, and they responded by joining the Association and getting involved."

And NCAE ESP leaders and members demonstrated their resolve in 2001 by winning a new state law, signed by the governor, that grants hearing and appeal rights to ESPs.

"When it comes to winning community support for schools and school employees, nobody does it better than an ESP," Rice concludes. "ESPs live in the community, they know the community, they are the community. And the community listens to them."

"When it comes to winning community support for schools and school employees, nobody does it better than an education support professional."

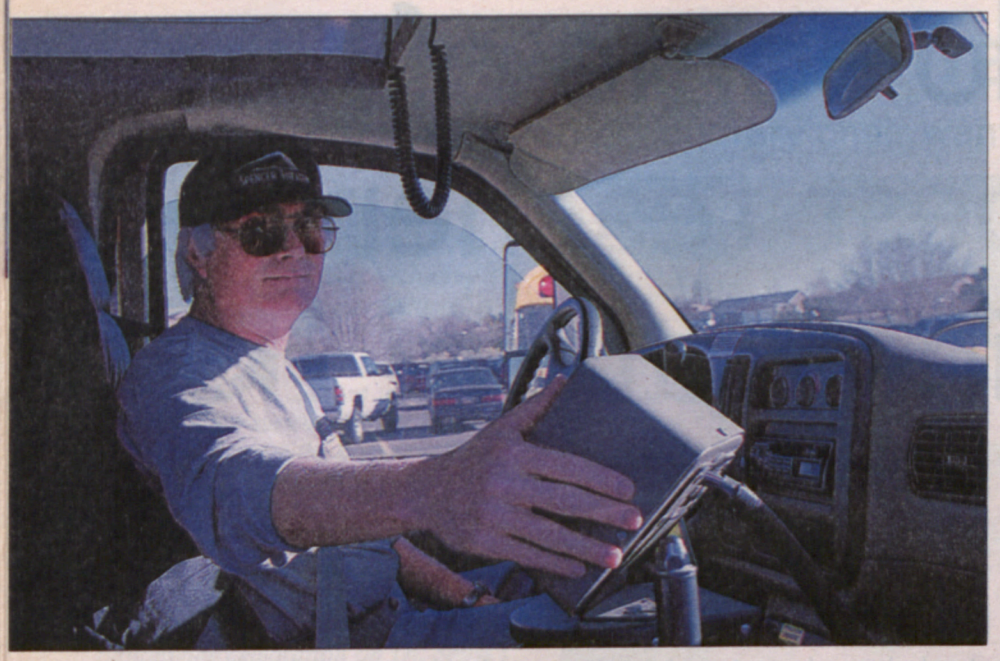
—Sandra Rice, North Carolina UniServ director

Issues That Unite ESPs

The common resolve of ESPs nationwide should be no mystery.

One need only look at just a few of the serious issues confronting these employees to understand why they are working with such urgency to gain a collective voice. ESP issues include:

1. Concern for students. "Every sur-



Jim Fox has spent hours of his own time visiting other drivers to talk about the need to organize. "It makes a huge difference to belong to NEA," he says.

vey and study shows beyond a doubt that the number one concern of ESPs is students," says Al Perez, director of NEA's national ESP program.

ESPs in every job category have a relationship with and responsibility to kids that is every bit as important as the teacher-student relationship. Yet ESPs responsible for student safety, security, and development are often given little or no training.

2. Low pay. ESPs hold jobs that are traditionally nonunion and low paying. Many work at or below the poverty level. Like other American workers, ESPs strongly favor federal and state legislation to raise the minimum wage.

3. Disparity in benefits. Full-time support professionals are generally pleased with their benefits. But the many ESP who work part time—or are employed by private contractors—are often denied basic benefits such as health insurance and pensions.

4. Lack of professional development opportunities. ESPs are often thwarted from turning their jobs into careers, or gaining promotion opportunities, because of a lack of professional development and advanced training. Most say they want professional development programs but can't pay for them.

NEA is responding nationwide by providing direct training programs or subsidizing ESP professional development.

5. Licensure. ESPs often have little documented proof of their qualifications. Even if they have earned local licenses or certificates, these may not be recognized in the next county.

NEA is working in many states to certify ESPs with licenses that are portable—recognized in other school districts and even nationally.

Despite the many challenging issues facing ESPs, surveys show that nationally, they rate satisfaction with their jobs higher than do many other education workers.

"ESPs are uniquely devoted to schools and kids," says UniServ Director Rice.

Which brings us back to Jim Fox. In 2001, he expanded his organizing efforts beyond his community in Santa Fe to the town of Las Cruces, where school bus drivers were preparing for a union election.

Fox traveled there and spoke to employees, one-to-one as well as from a podium. They won their election.

"I told them the truth—that it makes a huge difference for them to belong to NEA," says Fox. ✔

—Matt Simon

For more information on ESP organizing, contact your UniServ office or the ESP contact at your state NEA affiliate.

FACTS AND FIGURES

ESP Database

Education support professionals are on the move. They help carry out NEA's core mission—delivery of high-quality teaching and learning—and they comprise the fastest-growing membership segment of NEA.

What do the numbers tell us about ESPs? An overview:

- **At more than 330,000 strong, ESPs make up 14 percent of NEA's overall membership.**
- **ESPs account for 21 percent of all new NEA members.**
- **41 percent of NEA state affiliates gained ESP members in 2001.**
- **81 percent of ESPs plan to stay on the job until they retire.**
- **42 percent of ESPs have more than 10 years on the job.**
- **48 percent of ESPs provide services to students with special needs.**
- **54 percent of ESPs have completed some college coursework; 29 percent have completed trade, vocational, secretarial, or technical training.**
- **78 percent of ESPs volunteer in community organizations.**

YOUR DUES DID IT

ESP On the Web

Education support professionals have a home of their own on the NEA Web site. Go to www.nea.org/esp to learn more about:

- **The 2002 NEA ESP Conference, to be held in Birmingham, Alabama.**
- **NEA "Quality Workforce" publications on bus drivers and custodians.**
- **The lively E-mail discussion listserv for NEA ESP members and staff.**

Pennsylvanians Run Model ESP Campaign

Two years ago, the Pennsylvania State Education Association became concerned that the number of unorganized education support professionals in the state had grown extremely high.

PSEA applied for and received a grant from NEA to conduct a statewide census of locals and members to determine how many ESPs were working without representation.

Called "Census 2000: Every Member Counts," the project found that in areas where PSEA had teacher locals there were nearly 5,000 unorganized ESPs.

PSEA launched an internal organizing campaign that raised its membership from 22,000 to 27,000.

Nowhere were the results more dramatic than in East Stroudsburg. ESPs concerned about wages and other job issues embraced the organizing campaign and raised local membership by more than 50 percent, to 366 members.

PSEA is already providing requested programs such as safety training—as well as strong bargaining support—in the districts where its campaign has been focused.

In the next phase of its campaign, PSEA will begin external organizing of ESPs.

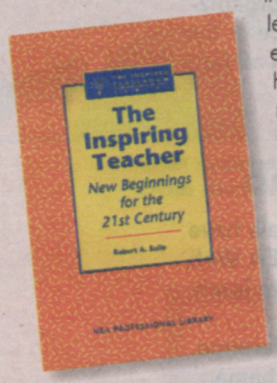
"This campaign is succeeding because our approach from the beginning was to *learn,* not tell," says Fran Pierce, director of ESP programs for PSEA. "ESP members talked to other ESP members and listened to their concerns. That was how the unorganized learned that their issues were being resolved in other NEA units around the state.

"Our success can be easily replicated in any state," Pierce emphasizes. "All you have to do is listen. You need to listen to individual ESPs' concerns before you can respond." ✔

Where do some of America's best teachers get their inspiration?

From the NEA Professional Library, that's where!

With all of the distractions facing kids today, it takes an inspiring teacher to keep students motivated and excited about learning. Whether you're an experienced teacher or new to the field, the NEA Professional Library has the resources you need to revitalize your classroom!



The Inspiring Teacher will show you how to inspire your students by maximizing their potential to learn. Maximizing that potential means, for starters, understanding brain-based learning — the latest research on how kids learn most easily and effectively. You'll also find in ***The Inspiring Teacher*** helpful tips on forming real-world alliances with colleagues and parents. And you'll also receive guidance on how to hone the skills you need to effectively resolve conflict.

168 pp., Item #2955-0-00-D
Nonmembers $16.95
NEA Members **$14.95**

How can you teach your students to learn without turning your class into a study skills lab? ***Inspiring Independent Learning*** shows you how to foster independent learning in your classroom through easy, often subtle, techniques that gently place responsibility for learning in the hands of the students. This book offers numerous strategies to use with students in grades K-12, as well as activities and record forms for classroom use. Special questionnaires and scoring guides will help you assess your students' metacognitive and study skills. And a peer tutoring manual will help you train peer tutors to be study skill coaches.

151 pp., Item #2954-2-00-D
Nonmembers $12.95
NEA Members **$10.95**

Take control of your classroom today! The restructured, diverse classrooms of today require a confident mastery of modern classroom management theory and research—tested in everyday practice. In addition to a unique glossary of strategies, ***Inspiring Discipline: A Practical Guide for Today's Classrooms,*** features sections on dissolving antagonism and resentment, recognizing and respecting people's limits, and using positive interventions. This guide will help you improve teaching and learning by giving you a broad base of behavior management strategies for inspiring discipline!

128 pp., Item #2950-X-00-D
Nonmembers $12.95
NEA Members **$10.95**

Get all three books for the low member-only price of $29.50, $34.50 for nonmembers!

Order before February 28 and get a free video—***Our Friend Martin: A Magical Movie Adventure!*** Based on the life of Martin Luther King, Jr., this animated movie features the voices of Whoopi Goldberg, James Earl Jones, John Travolta, Oprah Winfrey and many more!

Order the Inspiring Set and save 20%. Item #2956-9-00-D
Shipping and handling will be added to all orders.

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INTERVIEW

Garth Brooks Sings Praises of Literacy

NEA's Read Across America honorary chair wants a book in every child's hand.

Garth Brooks has won every award in music, including 11 Country Music Awards and two Grammys. He's played to the largest crowd ever in Central Park and was crowned the biggest-selling solo artist in music history. Now, he joins forces with the most adored star to cross his path: The Cat in the Hat. Brooks is honorary chair of NEA's Read Across America campaign for 2002, which will culminate in a nationwide celebration on Dr. Seuss's birthday, March 1, 2002. (Dr. Seuss actual birthday, March 2, falls this year on a Saturday.) Brooks has taken an active interest in literacy for the past decade, and now he wants to see a book in every child's hand. He spoke recently with Lian Skaf of NEA Communications about his involvement in the campaign.

Country music sensation Garth Brooks visits the first grade class of Tennessee NEA member Judy Cummings—who got him started as a literacy advocate.

How did you get involved with the issue of literacy?
A teacher named Judy Cummings invited me to do a celebrity reading to her class in 1989. Every day we had off from the tour and were home, I would go in and read to Judy's class. That's where my interest in literacy really began.

I became involved with NEA when I saw Morgan Freeman doing NEA's Read Across America public service spots last year. I'm a big fan of his. I figured, if he can find the time to help, then I certainly can.

Reading to Judy's class must have been a sharp contrast to being on tour.
Yeah, it was, and I loved it. I'll tell you, if you ever talk with me or spend any time with me, you'll know that I'm the biggest kid there is. I think that comes from my mother. She was the type of person who, if you weren't up at five in the morning on Christmas, she would already be knee-deep in wrapping paper.

Are you still able to find the time to read now? What do you enjoy reading?
The great thing about reading is that you can really do it at your own pace. Sometimes you can read for hours and sometimes for five minutes. If there's one book that I can't put down, it's the Bible. I've read the New Testament about five or six times now. Every time you read it, it's like a whole new book. The parables are absolutely amazing.

You've said you get much joy from reading to your children. What do you like to read to them, and what do they like?
It varies. My girls just received *Girl's Life*. I am going to make sure we read that from front to back. I was recently on a television show with Caroline Kennedy and she mentioned how her children memorize poetry and recite it to her. I think I am going to have my children do that for me once a month.

You once rushed home from an appearance to make it to your child's parent/teacher luncheon. How important is it to you to stay involved in your children's education?
Very important. That's what it's all about. I believe that for my children and for all children in all parts of the world, it comes down to how much common sense and academic preparation we provide them. They need our best.

That fact had a lot to do with the decision that this would be the last year in music for me. My job is to be with my children now. The only way to do that is to sleep in the same home and to be there as much as I can. I try to spend as much time with them as possible. I'm learning to do things like cook and just be their dad.

Is it tough to be involved in your children's school community since you're such a celebrity?
No, it's not tough at all. At home, everyone sees me as Taylor, August, and Allie's dad. Down here, we're a bunch of down-to-earth people.

You've said you would like to go into screenwriting. Would you like to be remembered more as a writer or musician?
It would be nice if people would say, "Did you know that Garth Brooks used to write and perform music?" Right now I'm in the listening stage of my screenwriting career.

How much is writing like playing music?
Playing music and writing screenplays are the only two things where I sit down for 15 minutes—and 12 hours passes and I have no idea. Those are the only two things in my life that have been like that.

How have you dealt with the September 11 tragedy with your own children?
I think there are two ways of looking at this. One: Welcome to the real world—to the realities of the whole world. Two: No. It is not going to take our freedom away. It was a horrible deed and now, those who caused it are being punished.

Each of my children deals with it differently; each child is their own person. My youngest daughter prefers to block it out. My oldest wants to know what these people are thinking, and my seven-year-old wants to know how to stop it. I think the most important thing is to spend time with each of them and figure out how they each deal with it. ✔

For more information about NEA's Read Across America year-long literacy campaign, visit the Web at www.nea.org/readacross.

RESOURCES

Get ready for NEA's Read Across America celebration, March1, 2002. The following resources, merchandise, and more are available at www.nea.org/readacross.

- *The Basics*
  A free crash course in how to plan a Read Across America event—from start to finish.
- *Read Across America Resources*
  A collection of free tools to make your event a success.
- *Read Across America Poster*
  Featuring Garth Brooks and school children. 17 x 22 inches on glossy paper. Minimum order 25. $0.75 each. Discounts for large orders
- *Read Across America Stickers*
  $25 for a roll of 500.

Learning

More Minority Teachers

The key to achieving this: Get more students of color into college.

It's no secret that today's teaching force is predominantly white and female.

At NEA's recent National Summit on Diversity in the Teaching Workforce, keynote speaker **Sharon Robinson**, executive vice president of Educational Testing Service in Princeton, New Jersey discussed ways to attract more students of color into the education work force.

"Research shows that if we can get a higher proportion of students of color into the postsecondary pipeline, teaching does very well in the competition among career choices," says Robinson. Because a high proportion of minority college graduates choose teaching, increasing the number of minority graduates should boost the number of minority educators.

The problem, says Robinson, is that minority students leak out of the college pipeline during their K-12 years. The critical hurdles are third grade reading, fifth grade math, and seventh grade algebra—points at which some students begin to think of themselves as college material, while others don't.

In addition to the academic factors, Robinson notes that "the nature of the work of teaching needs to be revealed to them."

To achieve this, Robinson suggests internships targeted for minority students while they are in high school. Interns could tutor or mentor younger students.

"Identify those kids who find this attractive. Then in college you've got to nurture them and stay with them." she says. "Teachers are in a position to see many signs of student advancement. If the job becomes one of recognizing and nurturing student achievement, it's a joyful job. Who would turn away from that?"

Leo Sorel

A former high school English teacher, Robinson held leadership positions at the NEA and served as assistant U.S. secretary of education before moving to ETS.

"What brought me into the field was the love of a specific discipline—English and literature," she says. "And as the eldest of five children, I knew I needed to get myself ready for a career and financial independence in a hurry."

For More: See the journal article "From High School to Teaching: Many Steps, Who Makes It?" at www.usc.edu/dept/education/CMMR/FullText/HighSchoolToTeaching.pdf.

John Miller

Mapping the Mail-Call Mentors

Monday is mail call for the fifth grade at the Reynolds Elementary School in Tucson, Arizona—a day the children know they will get letters from grown-ups around the world.

That's because NEA-Retired member **Barbara Soto** has set up a tightly organized E-mail mentor program for every fifth grader, more than 100 in all.

The letters are delivered on paper, so each message can be read by an adult to be sure there's nothing in it the child shouldn't see. That's just one example of the care with which Soto runs the program. She's also written a year-long set of lessons designed around the mentor E-mail. One week, she had the mentors (called "GeoPals") write about their personal heroes. They asked the children to write back about their own heroes.

The children's fifth grade teachers integrate Soto's lessons with their own. Many of the lessons involve geography, a result of Soto's training with the National Geographic Society.

Soto gets no pay for GeoPals but lots of satisfaction. "On mail-call day, the room is utterly silent while the kids read their letters," she says. "Some are poor readers, and they go over the letters slowly until they understand." When they write back, "their sentences are longer, they're more selective about adjectives. They have someone responding to their writing, and that gives it meaning."

The mentors come from 14 states and several foreign countries. They include retired newspaper editors, teachers, and many others—not all retired. Many contact Soto after reading about the project—and she's always looking for new mentors.

For More: Visit www.education-world.com/a_curr/curr333.shtml or E-mail Soto at msplace@earthlink.net.

'Youth Press'—the Students' Voice

Rosser

Mary Caton Rosser is helping young people in Wisconsin find their voice, and the rest of the Badger State is starting to listen.

Working with middle and high school students, Rosser has been nurturing writing skills and encouraging young people to use the media as an outlet for their talents. Not the mainstream press, mind you.—Rosser has helped students start their own statewide newspaper, online magazine, and radio program.

For almost five years, Rosser, a writer from the University of Wisconsin Eau Claire, has presented school seminars and worked with after-school groups to build confidence in aspiring writers and to show them that, when the subject is close to their lives, they have plenty to say.

"They are tackling tough issues like sexuality, alcohol, relationships, politics, or values, and learning to approach them in a way that is informative," Rosser says. "When they know their words are reaching thousands of people, they take their work to a professional level."

Their words hit print in a highly polished, 16-page newspaper, *The Youth Press of Wisconsin News*. With a statewide circulation of 30,000, it's now published three times a year. Funding for the production and distribution budget of $40,000 (students are not paid for their stories) comes from the Wisconsin-based Marshfield Medical Research and Education Foundation, businesses, and several state agencies.

The paper reaches most of the state's high schools. Many copies go home with students.

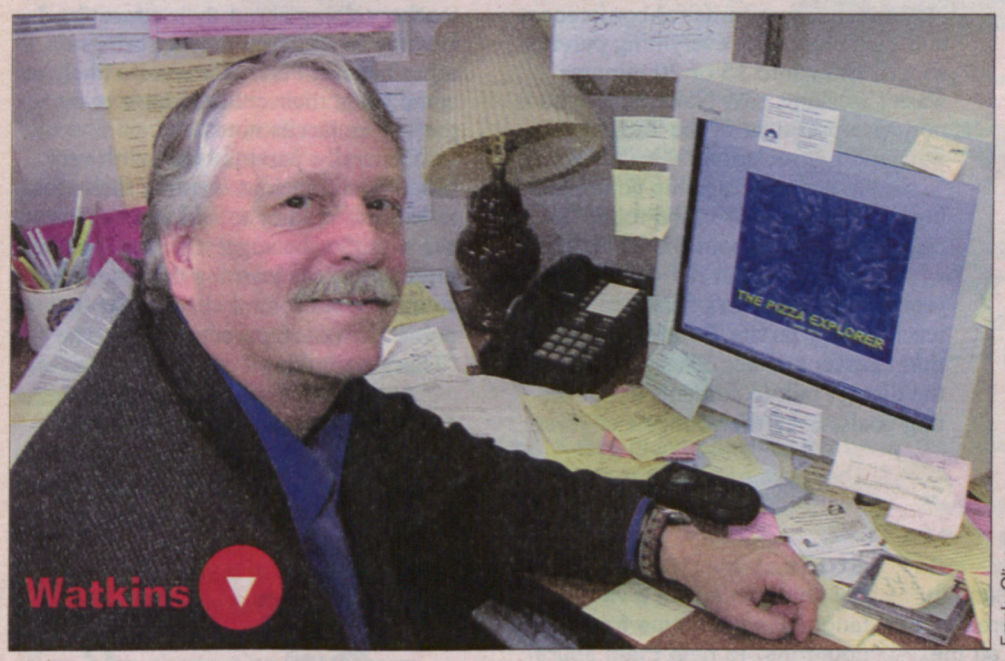
"Adults tell us they gain a new perspective from everything the kids write," says Rosser.

Students produce a two-hour radio show, Rebel Radio, with music, commentary, and call-ins, broadcast once a month on WOJB-FM at the Lac Corte Oreilles Reservation. An online magazine at www.youthpressmedia.com provides middle and high schoolers with an outlet for writing, photography, and art.

Rosser says some teachers are now integrating journalism into their classrooms to enliven the curriculum—for example, supplementing a history lesson with a student-organized press conference in which Martin Luther King announces a voter registration drive.

Says Rosser, "We've seen enormous growth in kids, especially students who haven't always fit into the traditional classroom."

For More: E-mail Mary Caton Rosser at rosston@discover-net.net.



Watkins

Frank Oliver

Pizza Explorer Delivers the Works

The quickest route to getting middle school and high school students interested in science just might be through their stomachs.

At least that's what **Bruce Watkins**, a Purdue University nutrition researcher and food science professor, thinks.

Watkins knew that teachers in the Lafayette, Indiana schools were always looking for more relevant science content. With funding from the Institute for Food Technologists, Watkins decided to cook up "The Pizza Explorer" Web site.

Imaginative cartoon characters introduce children visiting the site to a virtual pizza topped with the works. By clicking on any food ingredient, kids can learn its history, USDA nutritional assessment, and chemistry. They also learn how the food is processed. Once this information has been digested, kids can choose to take an amusing video game quiz conducted by the cartoon characters.

For More: Visit www.efph.purdue.edu/pizza/ or www.accessexcellence.com/pizza/ to see the Pizza Explorer. E-mail Watkins at watkins@foodsci.purdue.edu.

'Vital Links' for Support Professionals

When paraeducator Anna Martin took part in a Vital Links communication training, it opened a new channel to her special needs kids. Tips on "eye messages" and body language enhanced her receptivity.

"With my kids, you really have to be able to read them, because they're often non-verbal," says Martin, who works with special education students in Baltimore County, Maryland.

Vital Links is a professional development program created by NEA for its affiliates to build more effective teamwork among education support professionals and teachers. The program trains participants in new skills, clarifies classroom and other school-related roles, and promotes cooperative understanding of individual work, communication, and conflict-resolution styles.

Martin's training was hosted by her local, the Baltimore (County Instructional) Assistants and Clerical Employees.

"Vital Links empowers people and gives them a different way of thinking," says Marcella Kehr, BACE president and a middle school paraeducator.

Since 1995, BACE has conducted a Vital Links training at least once a year, bringing K-12 instructional assistants and clerical workers together—often more than 100 each time.

"We've used all the components. We've also adapted them to our needs," Kehr notes.

The best thing about Vital Links, Kehr says, is its interactivity. "People walk in and realize, 'This isn't going to be another one of those classes where we have to listen to someone talk to us.'"

For More: Contact Dan Hand at the NEA, 202/822-7107 or dhand@nea.org.

Sooner, Longer, Better

Parent conferencing gets a stronger focus in Tacoma, Washington.

When Elizabeth Nem's son, Vatt, started first grade at Point Defiance Elementary School in Tacoma, Washington last fall, she had one nagging concern: her child's persistence in using his fingers to count. Fortunately, it wasn't long before Nem, her son, and his teacher met for the first of their "partnership conferences," a new and improved take on the traditional parent-teacher conference that has now spread throughout the district's 37 elementary schools.

These meetings differ from traditional conferences in several ways:

- They start early in the school year.
- There are at least two per year.
- Each conference is fairly long—about 40 minutes.
- Students are full participants.
- Goals emerge from the conference; they aren't pre-set by the teacher.
- Parents and students develop goals to work on at home.

"I told the teacher that I want my son to count with his mind," says Nem. So, at the teacher's suggestion, Nem is using flash cards and other math exercises at home to gradually reduce Vatt's reliance on his fingers. Involving parents and children in setting such a goal and then giving them the tools to reach it—that's what partnership conferencing is all about.

"We have a conversation, with structure," says Gayle Nakayama, who, as a reading teacher at Tacoma's Larchmont Elementary School, was in the group that pioneered the practice about six years ago. "It's about relationship building and goal setting."

Teachers are trained to listen, ask open-ended questions and adjust their body language to be more approachable. Translators are on hand whenever possible. Sometimes the students themselves translate.

The first conference takes place by early October. There's a second in November or March, depending on the child's progress.

The idea grew out of school improvement discussions at Larchmont Elementary. A grant from the NEA's Foundation for the Improvement of Education (NFIE) and training from the Washington Education Association made the proposal a reality.

The old way of waiting until November report cards for conferences and then cramming everything parents should know into 15 or 20 minutes wasn't working, says Nakayama, who is now vice president of the Tacoma Education Association.

In contrast, partnership conferencing offers everybody in the room "a chance to dream about the child, about what we want him or her to learn this year," says Vatt Nem's first-grade teacher, Judy Jarvits. Before conference time, Jarvits and her colleagues all over the district talk to students about setting goals. Even the youngest children start using the vocabulary. Parents fill out an information form in advance, providing a conversation opener.

"Most children are very pleased to be the focus of the conference," says Jarvits, an educator for 35 years. "They enjoy hearing their parents and the teacher talking about their education." Having the children present brings other benefit: Parents are more likely to come when their children have to be there, too, Jarvits notes.

Generally, parents begin with very broad goals, such as wanting their child to learn to read or to add and subtract, she says. So she suggests more specific targets, such as learning the letter sounds or consonant clusters. At that point, she notes, parents will say, "That's something I can do."

At the end, everybody signs a plan setting goals for math, literacy, and

Idea Exchange

Four Corner Questions

During our extended block schedule period, my sixth grade students get restless and need an activity. I ask a multiple choice question about the current topic of study and assign each corner of the room a possible answer. To avoid having everyone follow the smart kids to the correct corner, I tell them I've struck a deal with the "brains" for them to purposely pick the incorrect corner sometimes. The kids love it because it involves everyone. It's an easy way to check for understanding, and after a couple of times, they're ready to return to their seats for more learning!"

Janice Vinco
Concord, California

Promoting Praise

When things get out of hand in the classroom, I take a break and have students write all the good things about every other student in the class.

I write the name of each student on a piece of paper and copy what everyone said about that student. Then, I give the student the paper with all the comments.

Before long, the entire class is smiling and saying, "Really? I never knew that meant anything to anyone. I never knew others liked me."

You'll find students treasure this paper and keep it with them forever.

Eileen Durgin-Clinchard
Omaha, Nebraska

Student Heritage

My students speak a variety of languages and come from many countries. To help them appreciate each other, I have them fill out cards with their names in English and their native language, a few phrases in their native language, and other information such as their likes and dislikes and how many siblings they have. I display the cards outside my room with a photo and a string leading to where they're from on the map. Parents look at these while waiting for conferences. It helps them learn about the other students and also be proud of their own heritage.

Barbara Pollak,
Manalapan, New Jersey

Works 4 Me
nea's e-mail classroom tip of the week!

Have a great idea? You can pass along your tip to *NEA Today*'s 2.6 million readers in one of five ways:

- By mail: *NEA Today*, 1201 16th St., NW, Washington, DC 20036
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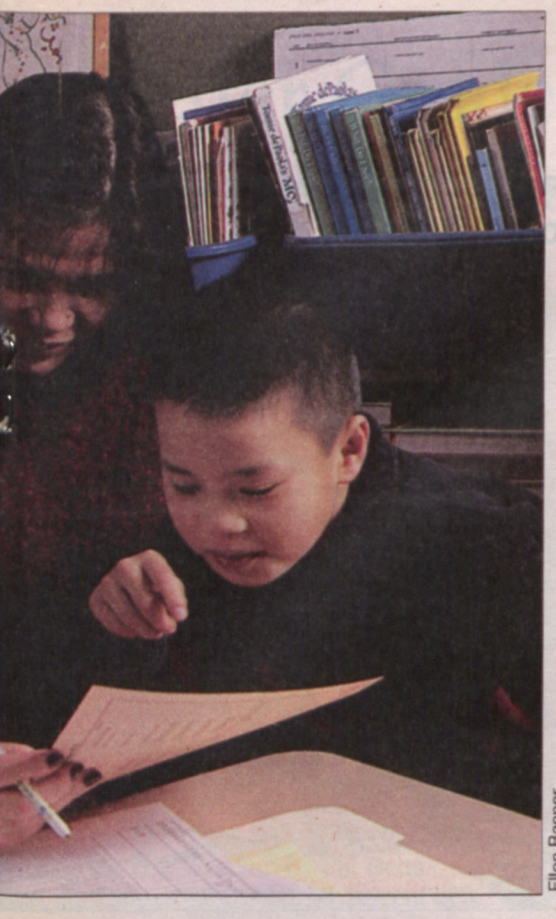
- By fax: 202/822-7206
- By E-mail: Ideas@neatoday.nea.org
- Through the Web: www.nea.org/neatoday



Ellen Banner

Thanks to Tacoma's enhanced parent conferencing system, teacher Judy Jarvits gets plenty of parent support in educating first grader Vatt Nem.

social skills. Included are details on how all the partners—the teacher, school, parents, and child—will work to reach the goals. "It is very beneficial," says Nem, who makes sure she spends an hour or two each day helping Vatt and his brother with schoolwork.

Jarvits has already had a second conference with most parents of her 20 students. For children with difficulties, she'll go beyond what's required.

Each conference sees the goals revised or continued. "The more times the parents hear the expectations, the more apt they are to follow through," says Jarvits.

The conferences also help parents understand what is going on in the classroom, Jarvits adds.

Nakayama says this enhanced conference program is especially useful for children and families living in poverty, who have difficulty setting goals when mere survival is a struggle. And it offers a non-threatening way to introduce school to parents from different cultures who may not be accustomed to participating.

"As teachers, we're used to taking it upon ourselves to be givers of knowledge," says Nakayama. "But with this model of partnership and parent participation, parents aren't being told what to do.

"Once we get them to a conference, they'll come back. If you connect with them just once, you're going to make the whole year easier." ✔

—Mary Anne Hess

For more: Contact Gayle Nakayama at gnakaya@tacoma.k12.wa.us.

[DILEMMA]

What do you do when a student cheats on an exam?

One of my son's very good friends was in my seventh grade class, and I caught him cheating. I just walked over and took his paper without making a big deal of it.

Years later, we're still friends. When I saw him, he asked, "Do you remember when you caught me cheating?" I actually didn't—but he did! I think the fact that he was caught made a bigger impression on him than if I had made a big deal of it.

Margie Steinberg
Seventh grade communications teacher
Mason City, Iowa

■ I teach writing. If a student plagiarizes, they receive a zero, may not make up the work, and must call or write a note home explaining the grade. This is in our student handbook. Several times in the last year I have had students try to copy work from the Internet—if the writing seems too good, it is worth a few minutes to search and see if the work pops up.

June Shultz
Eighth grade English teacher
Quarryville, Pennsylvania

■ I allow students to retake exams as many times as they want to. But if they are caught cheating, they receive a zero with no chance to retake the exam. This seems to work quite well. Students realize that if they didn't study for the exam, they still have another chance to succeed.

Barbara Daniels
Music educator
Elkhart, Indiana

■ The last time I had someone cheat on a major test, the punishment was as follows:

1) Take a new test and average the new grade with a zero.

2) Tell parents about the cheating, and have a parent write me to confirm he or she was told.

I also did this for an athlete who "mooned" a car on a school bus.

Lee Berger
High school English teacher
Franklin, North Carolina

Ted Pitts

■ I take the student aside and explain how serious cheating could be later in life. If it is the first time, I give the student another test. The second time, the student gets a zero.

Pamela Clark
Second grade teacher
Wyandanch, New York

■ I have the student write home explaining what they did. The parents must sign the letter and the student and parents must suggest an appropriate consequence. I then usually consult with the parents to decide on the consequence. This system helps the students take responsibility, and the parents are usually very appreciative.

Susan Bray
Eighth grade mathematics teacher,
Ellisville, Missouri

■ I staple the exam paper to the cheat sheet, mark the date, give the student a zero, and drop the subject. Usually, the student apologizes. In 11 years, only one student did not.

Angela Herron
Eighth grade English teacher
Ripley, Tennessee

■ If I catch the student early in the exam, I change their seat and mark the paper to show how far they had gotten before I noticed. If the test is nearly over, I let them finish. Then they must take the test again in a private setting. Most often, cheating is due to nervousness over the exam. Students need an opportunity to show what they know without the stress.

Kate Axlund
Sixth grade math and English teacher
Sturgis, South Dakota

Got an Answer?

How do you deal with a colleague who isn't doing his or her job?

E-mail your answer to dilemma2@list.nea.org. Or send by regular mail, or fax to 202/822-7206. Include your name, city, state, and job title. If published, you will receive an *NEA Today* mug!

"Real teachers measure once, then cut."

—Gary Fokken, agriculture and industrial education teacher, Canby, Minnesota

The Dollar Difference

Thanks to a federal grant, NEA members at five Maryland schools have solid training and research, and resources to teach low-income students.

It's reading time in her second grade classroom at William Paca Old Post Road Elementary School, and Maryland member Ellen Harris says she can't quite believe her eyes or ears.

"In the past for some students, it was a struggle to read even one book, let alone two or three," explains Harris, a 34-year classroom veteran." For others, it was a chore or a bore."

These days, the students in Harris's classroom are not only reading, they're recommending books to one another, books they can pull off the shelves of an 800-book classroom library.

The library is just one of the benefits of belonging to the Harford County Reading Excellence Act program, funded by a two-year $2 million federal grant for literacy programs. Set up for K-3 teachers in five Harford County Schools, this program combines a summer teaching institute, monthly training sessions led by reading specialists, and an extensive classroom library.

The five elementary schools—Havre de Grace, Hall's Cross Road, William Paca/Old Post Road, Magnolia, and Edgewood—serve the poorest children in the county, a requirement of the federal program established during the Clinton administration. "The idea is that children in these schools need even more attention and resources to help them learn to read," explains program coordinator June Clark.

Paul Tañedo

Ready to read? Second grade teacher Ellen Harris shares one of her 800 books.

What distinguished Harford County from other literacy programs is how the money is used. "Our program is broader in scope, combining teacher training and classroom resources," says Clark. "The summer institute and monthly meetings offer teachers the latest in reading research, and we have three teacher specialists who work with teachers in the program.

Sandra Leonard is one of those specialists. "We're here to guide the teachers in their efforts to help struggling readers succeed and fluent readers stay challenged," explains Leonard. "We also offer technical assistance. If something we suggest doesn't work for the teacher, we're there to help them through it."

Teachers like Ellen Harris value that extra help. "It's great to know someone is there to support your work and to help you if you don't understand a particular teaching strategy," says Harris. "They follow up with us and help us understand the research behind the work."

They also help organize each classroom library into reading levels and help the teachers guide readers through the levels. "Before, you had a library with a mix of books picked up at garage sales and library sales," says Harris. "Now, I've got a library that challenges and invites students to read."

The results are plain to see. "I've got students pulling out books and telling others, 'Just wait 'till you get to this level, this book's really great,'" says Harris. "It's every teacher's dream." ✔

—Anita Merina

Ready to Read?

March 1 is fast approaching, and that means it's time to plan your Read Across America celebration. What's in store for RAA this year? In Seattle, Washington, the Experience Museum will rock and roll to the sound of more than 600 kids and adults. In Oklahoma, members and students will hold reading fairs in shopping malls.

For more information or help with ideas, check out the pledges on the RAA Web site at www. nea.org/readacross/ pledge.html

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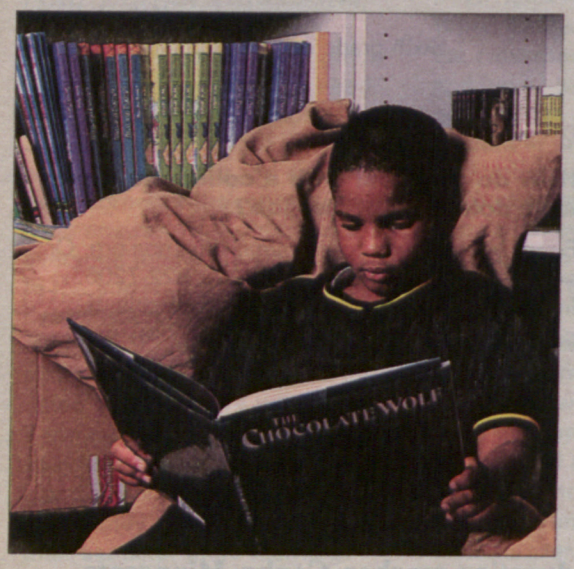
HOW TO... Win a Million for Your Program



The Reading Excellence Act grant program may be over, but grant possibilities aren't. The Bush administration recently designated $900 million in literacy funds in its Elementary and Secondary Education Act. How can you win one of these grants? Carol Hepler, creator of the Harford County Reading Excellence Act program, shares her tips.

Read the research. Know what you're talking about and how your program addresses critical needs and applies more recent research. Demonstrate your knowledge of what works and what doesn't.

Create a solid foundation of staff development. Invest heavily in staff development. Create programs that provide training, provide follow-up, and technical assistance. Programs with ongoing support mean you'll be able to handle problems and adjust to new challenges.

Offer high-quality reading materials. Choose books and supporting materials that provide the best reading for students.

Establish strong administrative and community support. Administrators must buy into the program and not impede its progress. And a strong family and parental involvement component is key—Harford County's program offered regular family reading nights and training for parents. Parents are also able to check out books from the classroom library to take home and read to their children—a critical key to success.

Better Grades for Public Schools

The public gives high marks, weighs in on testing, funding, and achievement.

For the first time in the 33 years of the Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup Poll, the majority of Americans give their local public schools high marks. And the more people interact with schools, they more they like them. Also, most people don't blame the public schools for the achievement gap between white and minority students—but do look to the schools to close the gap. These are among the findings in the 2001 survey.

How do people rate their public schools?

After taking a beating in the years that followed the Reagan administration's *A Nation At Risk* report and the torrent of criticism that followed it, the reputation of America's public schools is on the rise. In the 2001 Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup Poll, 51 percent of Americans rated the schools in their community either *A* or *B*.

What's more, public school parents, who actually have experience with the schools, have a considerably higher opinion: 62 percent give them *A* or *B*. When asked to rate their oldest child's school, the number with a favorable impression jumps to 68 percent.

But asked about public schools in the nation as a whole, 51 percent of Americans give them a *C*. This pattern—a higher opinion of the schools you know than of schools you only hear about—is true year after year, say the pollsters.

While people think education in America needs to be improved, they are strongly and increasingly committed to doing it through public schools. A resounding 72 percent think we should work to improve the public school system we already have, rather than finding an alternative to that system. That's a 13 percent increase over the previous year.

This is consistent with the finding that 62 percent oppose publicly funded vouchers for private schools, a percentage that's up 12 points since 1998.

What school problems capture the public's attention?

Lack of funding and lack of discipline tie for first place among problems the public believes schools face, each garnering 15 percent. Almost 60 percent also recognize that funding differs "a great deal" or "quite a lot" from district to district, both nationally and within individual states. More than two-thirds see a close link between the amount of money spent and the quality of education.

That number jumps to almost three-quarters when respondents are public school parents.

When divided along party lines, 64 percent of Republicans and 72 percent of Democrats believe that the amount of funding strongly affects quality.

What's the public's attitude toward standardized testing?

Reaction is mixed. Sentiment is growing, the pollsters found, that there's too much emphasis on testing as a strategy for school improvement (31 percent of respondents said so in the 2001 poll, compared with 20 percent in 1997).

Two new poll questions sought opinions on using high-stakes tests to determine promotion and high school graduation.

Nationally, 53 percent favor linking promotion to a single test, while 57 percent feel the same about graduation. Despite the general nod to high-stakes tests, 66 percent think testing's real value lies in determining instructional needs. That opinion is especially strong among nonwhites (77 percent) and those between the ages of 18 and 29 (79 percent).

About 65 percent believe classroom work and homework are the best measures of academic achievement.

The reason for the majority support for high-stakes tests may be indicated by the answers to a question about student achievement: 81 percent feel most students are achieving only a small part of their potential.

Do all children have equal opportunity to learn?

Although 79 percent say yes, white and nonwhite respondents react differently to this question: 83 percent of whites say opportunities are the same, but only 57 percent of nonwhites agree. The 57 percent figure for nonwhites is up 19 percent since 1978.

What's the public's perception of the achievement gap?

Forty-eight percent of Americans think the academic achievement of white students is higher than that of Blacks or Hispanics.

Nonwhites express this view very strongly, with 61 percent saying whites achieve at higher levels.

Closing the gap is very important or somewhat important to 88 percent of Americans (59 percent of Republicans and 74 percent of Democrats say it's very important).

What are the causes of the gap, and who should fix it?

A whopping 73 percent believe the achievement gap is mostly related to factors other than the quality of schooling. But 55 percent of those polled say it's up to the public schools to close the gap.

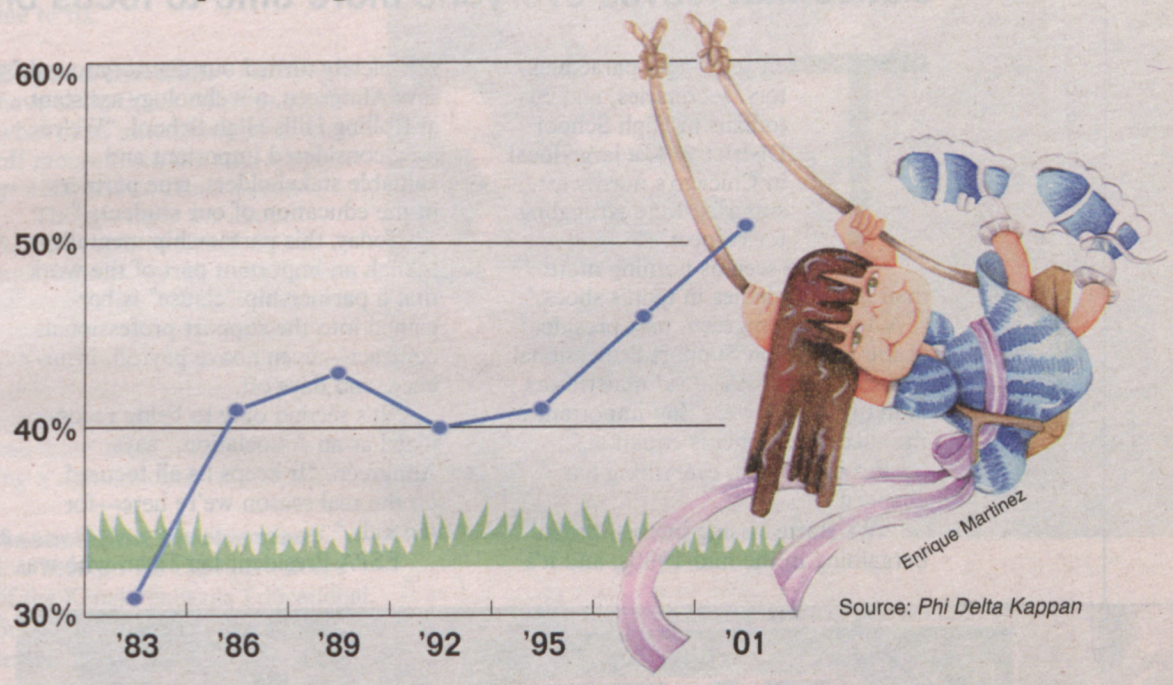
Lowell Rose, co-author of the study, says people aren't being irrational when they expect the schools to solve a problem whose main causes are elsewhere, they're just being practical.

Says Rose, "If there's a problem that has to be solved, the only institution that can reach out to all kids is the public schools." And that holds true whether the problem is hunger, health care, or multiplication tables. ✔

—Mary Anne Hess

For more: Visit www.pdkintl.org/kappan/kappan.htm.

An upswing in confidence



Source: *Phi Delta Kappan*

Percentage of respondents answering A or B when asked, "What grade would you give the schools here [in this community]?"

TEAMWORK

Bargaining Partnership

Support professionals and administrators in Illinois abide by a partnership clause that leaves everyone more time to focus on education.

Ten years ago, paraeducators, secretaries, and custodians in High School District 214, a large local in Chicago's northwest suburbs, were struggling for respect.

"We were seen as nothing more than little old ladies in tennis shoes," says Vickijo Almgreen, past president of the Education Support Professional Association (ESPA). "Administrators didn't think we were that important to the successful schools equation."

But since then, everything has changed.

"We started using interest-based bargaining in the mid-1990s, and it's completely turned our district around," says Almgreen, a technology assistant at Rolling Hills High School. "We're now considered important and valuable stakeholders, true partners in the education of our students."

Today, this partnership mentality is such an important part of the work that a partnership "clause" is bargained into the support professionals contract— even above payroll, insurance, and days off.

"It's second only to being recognized as an Association," says Almgreen. "It keeps us all focused on the real reason we're here—for the kids."

ESPA President Jan Trsar, who was hired to work as the secretary for the district's employee relations supervisor shortly after she became the Association president, says she and her supervisor have constant contact about Association issues.

"The fact that they hired the Association president to work for an administrator is huge," says Trsar. "But the whole idea revolves around a simple concept. The supervisor and I have a relationship that enables us to say, 'We might have a possible problem with the Association, let's work on it before it becomes an issue.'"

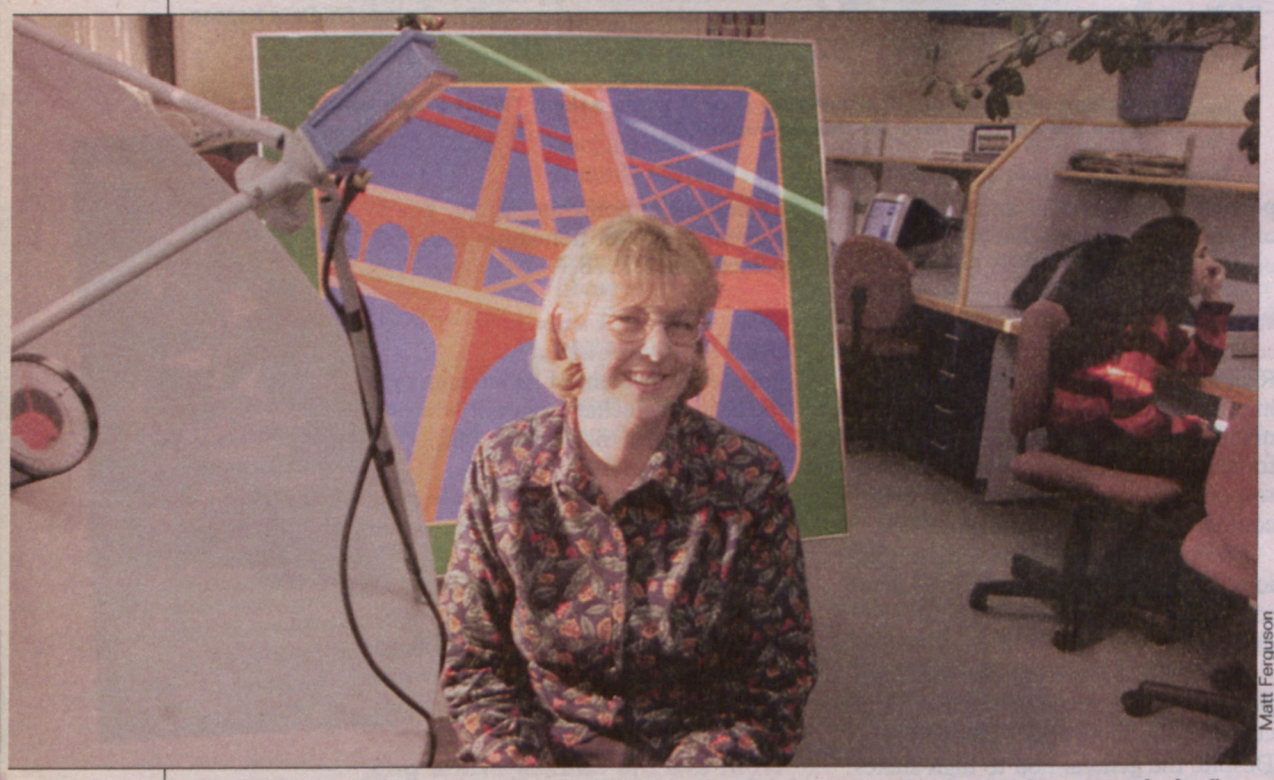
Through interest-based bargaining and the partnership focus, Almgreen says the days of long negotiations sessions and fighting are gone.

"We come to the table with respect for each other and a willingness to work through the process with open minds," she says. "If something seems to be going off course, all we have to do is point back to the partnership clause and remind ourselves that this is what we said we would do."

This focus has led to many outstanding benefits for the district's support personnel employees, including a $10,000 fund to reimburse members up to 75 percent of their college tuition and professional development costs.

Other benefits include paid holidays in the double-digits, the ability to take a leave of absence after only two years of employment, and a self-run health insurance program overseen by a committee of support personnel and administrators.

The Association's leadership has also worked hand-in-hand with administrators to present workshops to other support professionals at the Illinois Education Association's state confer-



Matt Ferguson

"Students remain our number one priority," says technology assistant Vickijo Almgreen.

Going the Extra Mile

The *Lincoln Journal Star* hailed Nebraska's **Jim Rehm** in a September 3 article that detailed Rehm's efforts to get Zeman Elementary School ready for the new school year.

Rehm, the head custodian, put in 100 hours in one week in an effort to get the school ready for opening day.

Zeman had been the focus of much school construction work last summer, including removal of asbestos, repair of a buckling classroom floor, and replacement of the gymnasium floor and the building's air-conditioning system. When the work got behind schedule, that meant 18-hour days for Rehm the week and weekend before school started, the *Journal Star* reported. Rehm was quick to point out that his only full-time helper, Jeff Picraux, teachers, paraprofessionals, and others also pitched in with the cleanup and preparation. "It was a team effort," Rehm told the *Journal Star*.

Many Christina Secretaries Association members are seeing more money in their paychecks thanks to a salary equity study the Delaware local conducted with the help of NEA Research.

Following the survey, which took two years to complete and analyze, more than 60 percent of school secretaries were upgraded, with salary increases ranging from $1,200 to $1,500 each. Two new secretarial job classfications were also added: executive secretary and program assistant. In addition, the local gained a few more bargaining unit members, as a result of the survey.

"It was time to correct inequities," explains CSA President **Pat Downes.** "Now we'll be enlisting the other DSEA

TEAM PLAYER

Moose Move On in Alaska

Name: **Kate Carmody**
Job Title: Head custodian, Sears Elementary, Kenai, Alaska

What I Do in My Job: I do what most custodians do: make sure the school's kept in good physical condition, clean and safe. We're a school of about 350 kids in kindergarten through second grade and we are a special needs school.

Sometimes I help out in the classroom. Last year, Mrs. Sorenson's students put together a huge storybook with drawings and brief stories about me and what I do. They called it "Hats Off to Ms. Kate."

First thing in the morning, I'm out in front of the school to make sure the kids get off the bus and into the building safely. I'm usually around in the lunchroom, and there's always a bunch of paperwork to be done.

Ours is a real community school, so I see the kids and their families outside the school. The students see me as part of the family; they come looking for me with things they need done. Before the holidays, one student brought in three nutcrackers for me to fix.

Beyond the Call: One thing I have to do that's different from what most custodians do is chase off moose from the school playground several times a year.

Though there are about 5,000 people in Kenai, this is rural Alaska, so the animals are all around us, and some, like the moose just like to see what's going on around them. They'll jump six-foot fences to get to our playground. Most of the time, I can scare them off easily by waving a sign attached to a shovel.

Association Involvement: I've been on the Executive Board of the Kenai Peninsula Educational Support Association for about the last ten years. Ours is one of the first ESP locals to be organized in Alaska. ✔

Jeff Schultz

ence, and to administrators at national conferences.

"We talk about our history and what it took to get to this point," says Almgreen. "We stress that building a partnership is about developing relationships and respect for each other. And we let them know that it takes time and effort to do so."

Both Trsar and Almgreen agree that the relationship has also affected the students.

"They see our partnership and realize that we are working as a team for them," says Trsar.

Adds Almgreen: "We can concentrate on our jobs and the education of students instead of worrying about our contracts or relationships. Our students remain our number one priority."

While they are certainly pleased with their good benefits and the ability to work in such a fair environment, both leaders say it's the open-door policy and newfound respect that really make the difference.

"We are listened to and respected," says Trsar. "In the end, that's what anyone really wants." ✔

—Dina S. Gómez

Partnership Points

- Partners share responsibility for common goals;
- Partners cooperate and collaborate to assure a positive relationship;
- Partners support each other as team members;
- Partners communicate with each other to assure that everyone is heard;
- Partners recognize and value each other's strengths; and
- Partners work to develop an environment that promotes trust.

RESOURCES

Music to Your Kids' Ears
ESP who work with young children may want to tap into a new program born of a collaboration between the people behind "Sesame Street" and the American Music Products Association.
The three-year effort called "Sesame Stree Music Works" aims at getting parents, educators, and and caregivers moving, singing, and making music. Evidence suggests that music making helps young children develop their brains and boosts performance in academic areas. There's a home video, a muscial activity guide, plus a Web site. All materials are free at www.sesamestreet.com.

Clean Air, Better Learning
Half of our nation's 115,000 schools have problems linked to indoor air quality, according to the Environmental Protection Agency. You'll find this out, and much more, if you take a look at the EPA's school Web site.

There's information on curricula to use, student performance, managing asthma, and trainings you can take advantage of. An IAQ Tools for Schools Kit covers virtually every aspect of indoor air quality. Checklists help you identify potential problems and what to do about them if you've already identified them. While you're at www.epa. gov/iaq/schools/, check out the schools that were named 2001 winners of the EPA's Excellence Awards, which recognize efforts to promote healthy school environments.

secretarial locals in our legisatlive lobbying campaign to add secretarial positions and reduce workload."

By day, Shelley Lazurus is a media specialist in the Bloomfield Hills (Michigan) school district. By night, she's often writing, and her latest work—a biogography of hockey great Steve Yzerman—is climbing up the charts.

"It's really written for younger readers," notes Lazarus who says she got the idea *Hockeytown Hero: The Steve Yzerman Story* (published by Otter Books and available at Borders and Amazon.com) four years ago, when she was tutoring a group of boys, ages 9 to 13.

"They were all Detroit Red Wings fans, "she recalls, and they all wanted to know about Steve." Their interest peaked when Yzerman's Red Wings team won the Stanley Cup.

The book is selling well and helping a local charity, too. Part of the proceeds go to one of Yzerman's favorite charities, the Gift of Reading Program.

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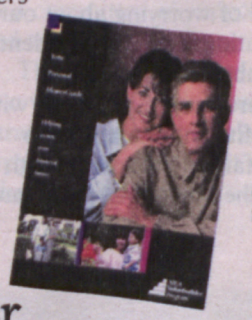

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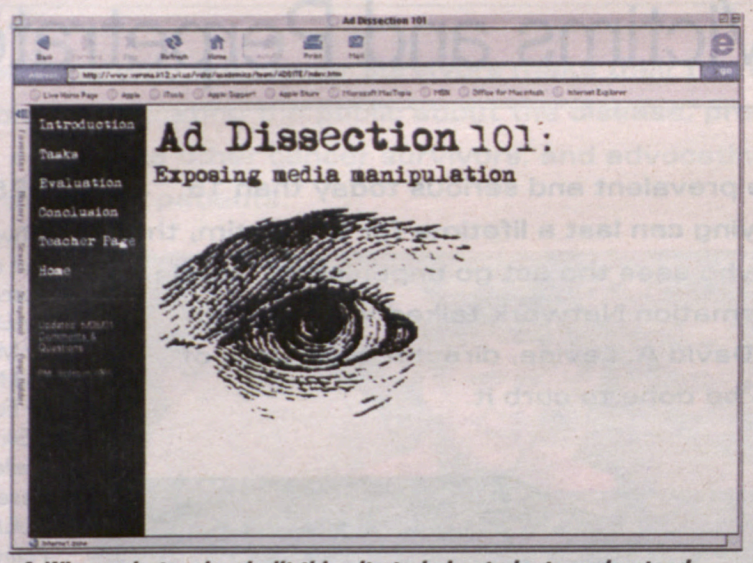
VBNT0202

Insights into Advertising



A Wisconsin teacher built this site to help students understand how advertising attempts to influence their decisions.

According to David Shenk, author of *Data Smog*, today's children watch an average of 22,000 hours of television before graduating from high school. These hours of television contain over a quarter million commercials, and it is these commercials that dictate to students what they should wear, how they should look, how they should act, and what they should have. Students need to know how to interpret the messages commercials send, so they can make informed choices based on well-reasoned decisions. We've created a webquest to encourage students to recognize the tactics advertisers use. Students also create a commercial to parody or help others recognize these messages as well. The address of the site is: www.verona.k12.wi.us/vahs/academics/team/ADSITE/index.htm.

Ryan Anderson
andersor@verona.k12.wi.us
High school English teacher
Verona, Wisconsin

Water, Water, Everywhere

Teachers are often looking to add to their repertoire of instructional strategies. At our school, we decided to collaborate to participate in an online Internet project called "The Global Water Sampling Project."

The focus of this project was to engage students in testing water quality of a local river or stream and then to collaborate with students and environmental experts from around the globe.

Our students took a field trip to a local stream to measure discharge rates, water velocity, and the amount of dissolved oxygen and other chemicals in the stream. They also captured benthic organisms called macro invertebrates that live in the stream and serve as indicators of water quality. Once the "live field study" was done, their results were posted to the project Web site and compared with those of other students from around the globe.

Students enjoyed looking for relationships and trends among the data collected and were thrilled to learn that the water quality in their neighborhood was of exceptional quality.

This project combined the best practices of hands-on science and technology integration using real-time data. Additionally, environmental experts and students around the world were part of the collaborative effort to teach our students about the importance of water quality.

This project runs every fall and spring and can be accessed at www.ciese.stevens-tech.edu/curriculum/waterproj/standards.html.

Lois Grasso
Eighth grade computer teacher
Fran Holberg
Eighth grade science teacher
Downingtown, Pennsylvania

Dream Site

This Web site is a teacher's dream. Throw out your red pen to grade. Let the computer grade your tests. Grading papers is now in the electronic age. You create your tests online; students take the test online; and the computer grades the test for you.

Your students' answers are automatically saved in a machine-readable format, and the computer does the hard work. You get the results and statistics, the students get automatic feedback, and best of all, it's *free*! I have used this program with my teachers and they love it. We also just put our school's handbook test online. www.12teach.com is simply wonderful.

JoAnn Santillo
Computer education coordinator
Canfield, Ohio

Cyrano Online

This is a nice activity to use when teaching Cyrano de Bergerac, especially if you can time the unit around Valentine's Day. Go to www.nando.net/toys/cyrano.html.

This is the "Cyrano Server," and with its help students can compose an E-mail love letter. Have them click on "love letter" and under what style of letter, click on "poetic." Students are asked to supply correct parts of speech to complete their letters.

Teachers can ask that the letter be sent to them for grading. This activity helps students internalize what Christian must have felt like when he needed Cyrano to write his letters for him! I've had great success using this as a culminating activity.

Carol Eanes
High school English teacher
Pilot Mountain, North Carolina

My favorite Web site

One of my favorites is www.questionsink.com. There you can find extensive links to things musical, including instruments, conducting, teaching, music and the brain, and games. A good site for the musically inclined.

Mike Dapcevich
Shoreline, Washington

TALK TO US

Have a nifty classroom tip or lesson plan that uses technology? E-mail a description (under 200 words) to wiredclassroom@list.nea.org.

Is there a Web site, CD-ROM, or piece of software you can't live without? E-mail your favorites—and why you love them—to myfavoritetech@list.nea.org.

Or respond by regular mail to *NEA Today*, or by fax to 202/822-7206, or through the Web at www.nea.org/cet.

Those published here will receive a sparkling *NEA Today* mug!

Bytes for Beginners

Beware of Changing URLs **might well be the watchword for new as well as veteran online users of Internet sites. You don't always get what you want when you see a site address and then try to access the site yourself on your own computer.**

In recent months, incidents of "Porn-Napping" have increased. Porn-napping refers to the practice by individuals or companies of purchasing lapsed domain names and turning them into pornography sites; they then charge high rates to the previous site owners who want to buy back the domain.

The Consortium for School Networking (CoSN) and the National School Boards Association (NSBA) recently issued a press release about this practice. Both were victims of porn-napping when their EDvanceNet project Internet site license was taken over.

EDvanceNet was launched in 1998 under the sponsorship of CoSN, NSBA, and the MCI WorldCom Foundation, to help promote the development of educational technology leadership among school administrators and policy makers.

Through the site, users were able to access a leadership toolkit and review research demonstrating how technology had improved the learning experience in K-12 schools.

The release asked the media to "to investigate and expose this practice that is affecting the education arena in a very negative way."

Art Wolinsky, technology director of the Online Internet Institute (OII), commented that porn-nappers are increasingly buying education-oriented domain addresses that become available.

To bring this problem to light, the Institute has begun to track the buy-up and conversion of education sites for non-education uses. Among the sites that the Institute has identified as having been taken over as adult or gambling sites are sites formerly operated by the 21st Century Teacher Network, Kids Learn to Read, and the Nebraska Department of Education.

The institute has created a mechanism for such sites to be reported at

Bullying Is on the Rise, but Intervention Helps Potential Victims and Perpetrators

Bullying in school is much more prevalent and serious today than 15 years ago. The effects of bullying can last a lifetime for the victim, the bully, or even the bystander who sees the act go unpunished. Jennie Young of the NEA Health Information Network talked with Martin Fleming, president of ForKidSake, and David A. Levine, director of In Care of Students, about bullying and what can be done to curb it.

Megan Dubbs

What are the main causes of bullying?
Bullying comes out of the quest to have one of four emotional needs met, says David Levine. These needs, as identified by William Glasser, are belonging, personal power, personal freedom, and fun. If students feel the alienation and isolation that comes from having an unmet need, they will often be motivated to gain control over their environments by seeking power over others through some form of anti-social behavior, such as bullying.

What steps can parents, schools, and communities take to help prevent these behaviors?
Levine and Martin Fleming agree: First, establish clear, constructive, consistent consequences that will be used in conjunction with rules that are always enforced.

Also, assist the victims to take back power.

Teach the life skills necessary to help a person manage potentially difficult life situations. Adults must take the issue seriously enough to dialogue with children or students in a way they can understand.

Empower the silent majority—bystanders—to report bullying.

Do not tolerate any form of aggression. Implement a school or district-wide culture-building initiative that creates emotionally safe settings where young people feel cared for.

Schools should provide training to staff members on understanding the nature of violence and aggression in school, how to effectively de-escalate a situation, and how to respond to a conflict between students.

What adult behaviors perpetuate bullying?
The belief that bullying is part of life, that it is a rite of passage, say Levine and Fleming. A belief like this, in which bullying is tolerated by an adult, is counterproductive.

Staff members in schools must also realize that a potentially volatile situation is escalated unnecessarily because the adult reacts in an oppressive and punitive fashion.

Can one intervene so that the bully doesn't retaliate against the victim later?
Yes. Minimize the bully's thinking that he or she was tattled on by using statements such as, "It has come to my attention," "I have heard from a number of sources," and "I have noticed," says Fleming.

Bring in the victim, stating that it is the bully's fault for the intervention. Say, "I will bring Sam in now. You have initiated this intervention." Make sure you emphasize that the situation will be closely monitored and the alleged victim will be re-questioned.

If children are afraid to report bullying, what can schools do to help?
Talk to students about the issues of harassment and bullying, says Levine. Let them know how important it is to report any such acts, and stress that all people have the right to feel safe and no one has the right to hurt anyone physically or emotionally. Create a culture that establishes the rules that will not tolerate these types of behavior.

NEA's National Bullying Awareness Campaign involves NEA affiliates and other national organizations in creating an awareness of the problem of bullying, and combining our collective resources to solve the problem.

NEA's Bullying and Sexual Harassment Prevention/Intervention program works in the classroom and at school events to help schools develop policies and activities to change school culture and allow all students to attend school without fear of harassment or injury. National trainers are available to work with each affiliate and school district. For more information, contact Gaye Barker at 202/822-7732, E-mail: gbarker@nea.org.

RESOURCES

- Two teachers' guides used as a part of NEA's Bullying Prevention/Intervention Program are *QUIT IT!—for Use With Students Grades K-3*, by Merle Froschl, Barbara Sprund, and Nancy Mullin-Rindler, published by Educational Concepts, Inc., the NEA Professional Library, and the Wellesley College Center for Research on Women; and *BULLYPROOF—for Use with Fourth and Fifth Grade Students*, developed by Nan Stein and written by Lisa Sjostrom and Nan Stein, published by Wellesley CCRW and the NEA Professional Library. Both are available through NEA's Professional Library online at http://home.nea.org/books/list.cfm or by calling 800/229-4200.

- *Can't We All Just Get Along? Dealing with Hate & Bias*, part of the NEA Safe Schools Now Network video series, is designed to teach young people that prejudices begin at an early age and often lead to disruptive and violent behaviors. Learn how schools have countered the effects of destructive stereotypes. To order, visit NEA's Professional Library online at http://home. nea.org/books/list.cfm or call 800/229-4200.

- *Through the Eyes of Howard Gray* by David A. Levine, an award-winning bully-prevention music video/documentary, tells the true story of a student ridiculed by his peers. $129 from: www.blueheronpress.com, 845/687-8772. For more information on David A. Levine and his work, visit www.davidalevine.com.

- *Building Classroom Communities: A Social Skills Resource* by David A. Levine assists the teacher in the creation of emotionally safe learning environments. $12.50 from www.blueheronpress.com, 845/687-8772.

- *Confronting Bullies & Helping Victims Through Support Groups* provides plans and activities for small-group experiences for bullies and victims. Contact Martin Fleming at martinf@forkidsake.net

- *Bully-Proofing Your School* by Carla Garrity focuses on elementary schools. This manual covers steps from classroom curricula to staff training. $35 from Sopris West, available at bookstores.

Advocates for Cancer Patients

Two NEA members who are cancer survivors make their mark outside the classroom by educating the public about the disease, providing advice, and support to other cancer survivors, and advocating for the legal rights of cancer patients.

In 1991, Virginia middle school teacher Kathleen Barry-Rodgers lost a breast to cancer and underwent reconstructive surgery. She then chose to have symmetry surgery, but was told her insurance would not cover it due to a state law that ruled her ineligible because of her date of surgery.

After months of calling her members of Congress and state lawmakers, Barry-Rodgers received a clear answer from the Department of Health and Human Services. The federal Women's Health Resource Cancer Act does not limit its coverage based on date of surgery. Because of her efforts, it was determined that state law is not in compliance with federal law.

Barry-Rodgers and her husband, Steve, are committed to bringing both county and state law in line with federal regulations. Barry-Rodgers, who teaches at Blue Ridge Middle School in Loudoun County, encourages other cancer patients facing insurance barriers to act.

"You can't be afraid to say, 'This is wrong,'" says Barry-Rodgers.

Educators like Barry-Rodgers often become health advocates in the wider community. This year, the NEA Health Information Network is honoring both Barry-Rodgers and Jeannie Lane of Waddy, Kentucky with the Vivian Roy Bowser Cancer Education Award for their advocacy of cancer patients' rights and for educating the community.

Lane, a kindergarten teacher at Collins Lane Elementary School and vice president of the Franklin County Education Association, is a survivor of bladder cancer. With support from her school board, she organized cancer survivor education projects featured on local cable television, participated in the Memorial/Survivor Cancer Walk, and coordinated a blood drive for teachers. Last summer, she was elected secretary of the NEA Cancer Survivors and Supporters Caucus (CSSC).

"Jeannie Lane is a constant source of inspiration to friends, family, and colleagues," says FCEA treasurer Marilyn Money.

Barry-Rodgers and Lane both acknowledge that they would not be where they are today without the support of their families, friends and communities. "I learned how many teachers are affected [by cancer] and how we can band together to support each other," says Lane. ✔

—Kandra Strauss
NEA Health Information Network

Sandy Schaeffer

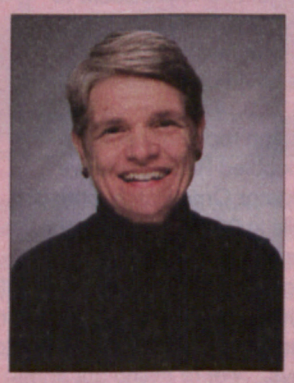
Middle school teacher and cancer survivor Kathleen Barry-Rodgers took on health insurance laws that denied her medical treatment. She also encourages other cancer patients to stand up for their rights.

NEA and the Texas State Teachers Association established a national endowment to honor Vivian Roy Bowser, a former Houston teacher who lost her battle with breast cancer. The Cancer Education Award is given annually to an outstanding individual or individuals who exemplify the award's namesake through dedication to: cancer education, support or advocacy groups; educating others through the local, state or national Association; and other activities that affect NEA members or other school employees.

For information about the Vivian Roy Bowser endowment or the NEA Cancer Survivors and Supporters Caucus, contact Danielle Rentz at 202/822-7797 or visit the NEA Health Information Network Web site at www.neahin.org.

Quick Tip

Jeannie Lane



Don't wait for adversity in your own life to learn to focus on what really needs your attention. Take care of yourself, because many people depend on you. My cancer diagnosis helped me to focus on my priorities and taught me to deal with adversity. Here are some tips.

1. If you think something might be wrong, you owe it to yourself to make a doctor's appointment.

2. If you have been diagnosed with cancer, get additional advice and information from a second specialist. Keep a journal to help you work through your feelings.

3. Keep your friends informed and use their strength and support. A sense of humor, too, can make a big difference.

4. *Live your life!* We cannot know how or when we will die, but we can decide how we will live. I choose to live a happy life, and to be truly grateful for my faith, family, and friends.

Jeannie Lane, a kindergarten teacher in Waddy, Kentucky, is secretary of the NEA Cancer Survivors and Supporters Caucus.

NEA HIN

From the **NEA Health Information Network**

PROMOTE PATRIOTISM AND AWARENESS

Project ROSEBUDS is an educational clearing house that promotes patriotism by honoring veterans and the armed forces, and creating awareness of major health issues in our nation. For information on how their kits can be used in your community, visit www.usarosebuds.com or write Project ROSE BUDS, P.O. Box 658, Flossmoor, IL 60422.

HELP FOR CHILDREN OF SUBSTANCE ABUSERS

The National Youth Anti-Drug Media Campaign has several new resources to help children of substance abusers and adults who care about them. Materials include free posters, brochures, and other resources that encourage children to talk to supportive adults, and information for adult caregivers. Phone 800/788-2800 or E-mail info@health.org.

TALKING WITH CHILDREN ABOUT DRUGS

Dominic Cappello's *Ten Talks Parents Must Have with Their Children About Drugs and Choices. Ten Talks* offers practical advice on how to begin and what to say—not just about drugs, but also about peer pressure, stress, health, the law and mixed messages in the media. $13.95 at bookstores or www.tentalks.com.

IDENTIFYING AND PREVENTING EATING DISORDERS IN STUDENTS

BodyWise materials, developed the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, provide information on how to identify and prevent eating disorders among middle school students. The packets include a handbook, factsheets, and additional information and resources. Special materials are available for young women in high-risk groups. For more information visit www.4woman.gov/BodyImage or visit www.health.org/gpower.

United In Song

Andrew Itkoff/Silver Images

Florida's **Marie Jo Thum** is proving that music has a deep power to both heal and connect.

Two weeks after September 11, the music teacher at Coral Sunset Elementary School in Boca Raton wrote and recorded a song for her students to help them address and affirm their feelings about the tragedies.

Today, "Rise Up, America!" has become a patriotic anthem for children across Palm Beach County. It's also gaining national attention among students and teachers.

"Words didn't seem enough to comfort and console my students after 9-11," says Thum, who has composed more than 100 songs during her 31-year teaching career. "Music is how I express my own life, and writing the song was my way of helping the children validate their feelings."

The children reacted so strongly to the song that Thum arranged for them to record it on their own CD, which also contains the Pledge of Allegiance and "Yellow Ribbons," a song she wrote during the Gulf War.

Proceeds from the $10 disc have been going to the September 11 Fund, a charity providing aid to terrorist attack victims' families.

"I've been getting calls from teachers and students across the country who say the song is providing a much-needed outlet," she says. "It's made the world smaller, in a way. Children across the country are connecting and uniting."

The song includes the lyrics: "Rise up, America! Rise up and shake the dust! We uncover, we discover, courage, kindness, love and trust. We are taller than a building; We're united shore to shore; So we must rise up, America! Stand prouder, love stronger, shine brighter than before!"

Thum says she's heard her students singing it on the playground, in stores, and even in church choirs. "I think we've all learned that when the worst happens, people dig down deep for their best. We've become kinder and more compassionate because of what happened September 11. We became united like a family, and if this song has helped facilitate that, then I've accomplished what I wanted to."

For more: E-mail Thum at eaglerun@bellsouth.net or visit the Web: http://home.bellsouth.net/personalpages/PWP-mjthum. ✔

Guatemala Comes to Milwaukee

Mark Hoffman

As part of a sister city project, the principal and four teachers from the Flavio Rojas Elementary School in Chichicastenango, Guatemala trekked to Wisconsin last November and shared their culture with students in Waukesha.

The Guatelmalans came in part to personally thank Wisconsin NEA member **Christine Diaz-Arntzen** (left) and her husband, who had gone to Chichicastenango in the summer. The couple packed camping gear, a tent, two sets of clothing—and 900 books for the 900-student school.

"For many of these children, it was first book they'd ever had," says Diaz-Arntzen, coordinator of the sister-city project between Chichicastenango and Waukesha.

Diaz-Arntzen, other school staff, and the students raised $500 to purchase the books. The publishing house Scholastic then matched that amount. The Guatelmalan visitors returned home from their most recent visit with even more books.

The celebration in Wisconsin marked a growing relationship. "In the past, we've painted the school, created a playground, and built 20 bathrooms—they only had two for 900 students," adds Diaz-Arntzen. "We're building a real bond between the two communities." ✔

Helping Immigrants Achieve College

Two years ago, one of **Gerry Maak**'s former students—brought to America from Mexico as a child by her undocumented parents—went to register for classes at the University of Utah. She was turned away because of immigration laws that prohibit undocumented persons from attending college unless they have a student visa, can afford to pay out-of-state tuition, and can prove that they can pay their living expenses.

"This student grew up in Utah and she won scholarship money to attend college," says Maak, a Spanish teacher at Park City High. Maak spent months meeting with the University's board of regents and president to try to change the policy. "While everyone agreed that it was totally unfair," says Maak, "there was nothing we could do because it's a federal law."

So the 20-year veteran took her cause to Capitol Hill and solely lobbied Representative Chris Connors and Senator Orrin Hatch, both of whom will introduce bills in 2002 to change the "terribly out-of-date immigration laws," she says.

"We are raising a generation of people who will be a huge underclass in society because they are not allowed to receive financial aid, even if they want to go to college," she says. "We're telling our immigrant students to strive for the American dream, and

A Mission of Quality

Since September, Texas physics teacher **Celani Dominguez** has been helping some of the world's premier scientists better understand K-12 education.

As an Albert Einstein Distinguished Educator Fellow, which offers math and science teachers year-long fellowships to serve on Capitol Hill and in federal agencies, Dominguez is working through the Department of Commerce at the Maryland-based National Institute of Standards and Technology.

Her assignment: to study the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Program—a coveted tool used by thousands of organizations to improve performance—and make recommendations to help the program better understand the needs of education organizations.

"Education has traditionally shied away from business tools in the past, but the Baldrige criteria has so much to offer educators," says Dominguez, who's taught at Reagan High School in Austin. "I believe the tools could help us put best practices and quality programs into schools that need it most."

The nine-year veteran, who is finishing her doctorate in educational administration with an emphasis in public school leadership, wants to return to Texas when she's done with her fellowship to put her learnings into place. ✔

Paul Tañedo

Steve Wilson

then policy turns them away when they go to reach for it."

Though she's gained the ear of Congress, Maak doesn't consider herself a political activist. "I wasn't looking for a political cause," she notes, "but now I can't stop thinking about it."

In October, Maak received a Milken Family Foundation 2001 National Educator Award. She's putting the $25,000 prize money into an endowment fund to help her school's undocumented Latino students attend college when the laws are finally changed. ✔

On to Active Duty

Veteran's Day held special significance for **Pauline Geraci**, an adult basic education teacher at the Minnesota Correctional Facility in Stillwater. She's now on active duty in the U.S. Army.

Geraci was mobilized after the tragic events of September 11. Her orders specify that she will serve a minimum of one year on active duty, that she will initially go to Japan, and that she will work in public affairs. She doesn't know whether she will eventually serve in Afghanistan.

The new orders left her scrambling. She had to pack, make arrangements for her four pets (her fiancé will watch them), and to organize her work so that someone could fill in for her—not an easy assignment.

Geraci has used several grants from the Education Minnesota Foundation for Excellence in Teaching and Learning to advance the cause of her at-risk students. And it's these students who will miss her the most. As one of them told her, "There is no one else like you, Ms. G. I don't know how we're going to replace you." ✔

Terry Faust

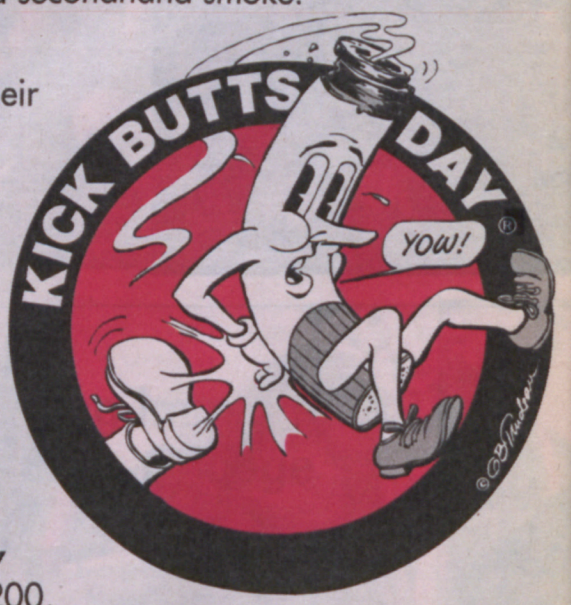
Every Day

Every day, roughly 5,000 kids under the age of 18 try smoking for the first time, and more than 2,000 kids become new, regular daily smokers. And for decades Big Tobacco has targeted kids in order to addict lifetime customers. Together, teachers and students can break this deadly cycle.

APRIL 03 2002 APRIL 03 2002 APRIL 03 2002 APRIL 03 2002 APRIL 03 2002 APRIL 03 2002 APRIL 03 2002

Teachers all across the country will unite on April 3, 2002 with thousands of kids, parents and community leaders on Kick Butts Day to fight tobacco addiction and secondhand smoke.

Elementary, middle and high school students will demonstrate their leadership with events at hundreds of schools across the country. Activities include merchandise dumps of tobacco-branded items, rallies in schools and state capitals, mock trials for Mr. Butts and the Marlboro Man and much more.



A free activity guide will give you everything you need to plan a successful Kick Butts Day with your students. To order your free guide, visit our web site at **kickbuttsday.org,** or send the coupon below to the **CAMPAIGN FOR TOBACCO-FREE KIDS,** Attn: Kick Butts Day Activity Guide, 1400 I Street, NW, Suite 1200, Washington, DC 20005 or fax it to 866-889-7108.

April 3, 2002

TAKE CHARGE
Shut Out Big Tobacco's LIES
CAMPAIGN for TOBACCO-FREE Kids
tobaccofreekids.org

NEA HIN
National Education Association
Health Information Network

Join with the NEA Health Information Network and the CAMPAIGN FOR TOBACCO-FREE KIDS to demand a healthy future for America's youth.

NEA HIN & Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids
Kick Butts Day 2002
Activity Guide Request Form

Name: _____
Ms./Mr./Mrs. First Middle Last

Organization/School: _____

Street Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Country: _____

Phone: _____ Fax: _____

E-mail: _____ Number of guides requested (limit of 3) _____

Sign up on line at kickbuttsday.org or complete this form and return to:

CAMPAIGN FOR TOBACCO-FREE KIDS
Attn: Kick Butts Day Activity Guide
1400 I Street, NW, Suite 1200 * Washington, DC 20005
or Fax: 866-889-7108

CAMPAIGN for TOBACCO-FREE Kids

Retirement Planning on the Web; Strategies for Beginning Investors

Q: I want to start a Roth IRA for my 21-year-old son. Where is the best place, a bank or a mutual fund?

A: I have the same idea. My 15-year-old daughter had her first real job last summer, busing dishes at an ice cream parlor. For Christmas, we opened a Roth IRA for her.

Opening an IRA for a young person is a wonderful gift because the money has so long to grow, and it can teach so much about the power of compounding and of starting early.

We chose a mutual fund company because the money has so long to grow and over time, the stock market has provided the best returns. The best choice for a one-fund account is a fund that represents the broad stock market, such as a stock index fund.

Q: I'm told 403(b) annuities have excessive fees compared to 403(b)7 plans from mutual funds. Why do fees matter?

A: You are correct that 403(b) annuities have an extra set of fees. That's because annuities are insurance company products and there is an insurance cost built in. But you want to look at the total expenses. I've seen annuities with total expenses of under 50 basis points, or of 1 percent. To be fair, 403(b) annuities with higher expenses typically include individualized, face-to-face service.

Fees are important because they represent money that is shaved off your investment every single year. The longer you invest, the more you pay. When the stock market soars, investors often say fees don't matter. That's never true. But when the market is flat—or down—fees loom even larger. Suppose your investments lost money in 2001 and then you paid 2 percent of the total in fees besides. Ouch!

Q: Can you recommend a good interactive retirement planning Web site?

A: The problem with retirement planning software is that it depends on the assumptions the designers make about dozens of things such as what kind of returns you will get and how long you might live. One of the more sophisticated designs is the one done by Nobel laureate Bill Sharpe at www.financialengines.com. You can test drive the engines before you decide whether you might like to subscribe.

Morningstar, the mutual fund publisher, designed a product called ClearFuture, which you can see at www.morningstar.com. I write an investing column for www.msnmoney.com that has retirement planning tools, as do most other mutual fund sites. You can also find valuable retirement planning information and financial calculators on the NEA Member Benefits Web site at www.neamb.com.

Play around with these tools. But don't get wedded to a particular day and year that you will retire. They are useful but you shouldn't believe that the numbers are written in stone.

Q: Your reluctance to name the best mutual fund for beginners means many potential investors will turn away. Why won't you help them?

A: This question comes from a retired economics teacher and he makes a good point. Beginners often feel overwhelmed by the thousands of funds available, and many of them throw up their hands and decide not to invest at all.

Still, I don't think naming a fund is the right answer. My experience is that too many investors want someone to give them a magic bullet. Name the fund and they'll buy it. But then what happens if the fund declines in value? The investor doesn't know why he bought it or whether he should hang on.

The only answer is education. A good place for beginners to start, as this teacher pointed out to me, is with a fund that represents the broad stock market, such as a total market index fund. ✔

Mary Rowland is an author and contributor to several financial planning magazines. E-mail your personal finance questions to MoneyQuestions@neamb.com.

Ninety-five percent of NEA members using the NEA Home Financing Program would recommend its home equity products to another member.

Keith MacLelland

Heads Up from NEA Member Benefits

Recent stock market fluctuations and the changing interest rate climate have served to remind many Americans that their most important investment is likely to be their homes.

U.S. homeowners have accumulated trillions of dollars in equity, and a growing number are tapping into the available equity in their homes to improve their overall financial situations.

With the rise in home values, drawing on home equity can create a number of advantages. Whether the goal is to start an important home improvement project, pay off pricey consumer loans, or make a tuition payment for a child's education, homeowners in search of funds may find that making their home's equity work for them is the right financing solution.

Compared to other consumer lending products, home equity products offer competitive pricing and provide flexibility in loan amounts and payment terms. Home equity loans and lines of credit may also provide additional tax benefits.

To understand the specific tax benefits associated with home equity loans and lines of credit, homeowners should consult with a tax advisor. The optimal home equity loan amounts, credit limits, and terms will depend on the borrower's financial history.

The NEA Home Financing Program offers home equity loans and home equity lines of credit. To learn more, contact the NEA Home Financing Program at 800/NEA-4-YOU (800/632-4968), Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 9 p.m., and Saturday, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., ET.

Thrifty Educator

This month's tips come from Susan Wood, a sixth grade teacher in Elk Grove, Texas, and Christy Crahan, a first grade teacher at Verdugo Woodlands School in Glendale, California.

Wood: I encourage my students to recycle and, as part of a real-world application, I use recycled items in my classroom. I take the cup holder trays I get from McDonalds and place yogurt containers in them. I fill them with paints and use them as paint trays. It's good to leave one container on the tray filled with water so the students can rinse their brushes. The yogurt containers are easy to clean and the trays become nicely decorated!

Crahan: I use ice cream sticks to aid children in writing sentences. I give everyone a stick with their name written on the left side for directionality. I make a green dot for "GO," following the child's name, to remind the children to begin a sentence with a capital letter. On the right-hand side, I make a red dot for "STOP," to remind the children to put a period at the end of a sentence. I call this "Green Light, Red Light." The students can use the sticks for spacing between words, since they're just the right dimension.

Got an idea?

If you have a suggestion for how your colleagues can save money at school, send it along to neatoday@nea.org.

Low Grades for High Tech in Schools

Computers' effects on learning fall short of expectations.

EXCERPT

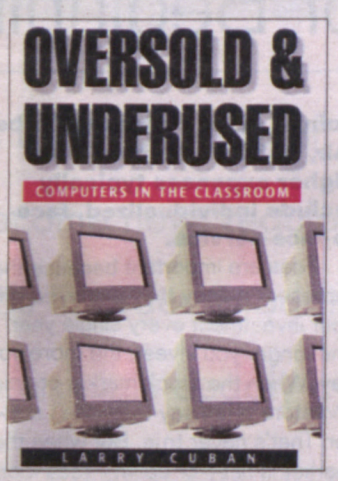
"Without attention to the workplace conditions in which teachers labor and without respect for the expertise they bring to the task, there is little hope that the new technologies will have more than a minimal impact on teaching and learning."

OVERSOLD AND UNDERUSED: Computers in the Classroom
By **Larry Cuban**
256 pp. $27.95 (Harvard University Press)
To order visit: www.hup.harvard.edu or call 800/448-2242.

Over the past two decades government, corporations, and individual donors have pumped billions into hardware and software for U.S. schools. Politicians, parents, CEOs, school administrators, and many educators tout this push for technology in the classroom as essential to getting U.S. students equipped to compete in the global marketplace. Yet, walk into the average classroom and you're likely to see students working with paper, pencils, and textbooks, says Larry Cuban, professor of education at Stanford University and former high school history teacher.

Using national data and his own school surveys in the high-tech capital of Silicon Valley, Cuban offers a thought-provoking analysis of why technology has failed to live up to its promises. His findings contradict those who label educators as technophobes, wedded to traditional methods and materials. Instead, he points the finger at reformers who assumed technology would transform teaching and learning, but neglected to consider school organization, teachers' classroom experiences, or the broader purpose of education in a democratic society.

The book first focuses on several preschools and kindergartens where many of the children used computers at home. Most teachers also owned home computers and thought they had a place in the classroom, but mostly for enrichment or as an additional "center" for children to choose. Few teachers felt competent in computer troubleshooting and, in one amusing example, a four-year-old showed the teacher how to change the desktop settings. The teachers and parents surveyed did believe children would need tech skills to succeed in the workplace, but they all saw school as providing a lot more.



"Preschools and kindergartens ... seem to offer the continuity, care, attention, character building, and stimulation that traditional families once offered children at home .... Teachers opted for building emotional, social, and intellectual ties that reached well beyond proficiency with machines."

For high school students in Cuban's book, the situation wasn't much different. Almost 90 percent had home computers (higher than the national average of 56 percent), and their schools were well equipped. Teachers reported heavy computer use for planning, downloading materials, record keeping, research, and E-mailing colleagues and parents. Yet, as part of instruction, computer use was "uneven and infrequent," writes Cuban. Why? Not surprisingly, most teachers cited lack of time to choose and test relevant software and lack of training to meet their specific needs.

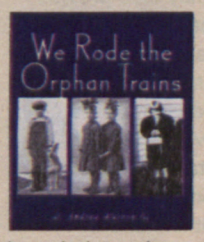
But Cuban, who found similar results in classrooms at Stanford University, says the reasons go deeper. Teachers have a lot of discretion about what goes on in their classrooms, and before deciding which electronic tools to use, they ask practical questions about reliability, simplicity of use, skills covered, ability to motivate students, how it fits into allotted class time, and tech support. High-tech tools that don't merit positive answers may gather dust. So, Cuban says, policymakers must fully involve teachers in technology planning.

The problems facing many urban and rural schools—inequitable funding, health and social needs of students, crumbling facilities—have little to do with lack of technology, says Cuban. Faster access to more and more information also doesn't mean that students will have the critical thinking skills to turn that information into knowledge. So he's not really surprised that the money and time spent on computers "have yet to yield even modest returns ... in academic achievement ..." He fears that bulging technology budgets will eat up money for smaller class sizes, higher entry-level teacher salaries, full-day kindergartens, and cross-disciplinary high school programs.

Above all, he says, as a nation we need to reaffirm the broad democratic purposes of schooling. Without that vision, he says, "Our current excessive focus on technology use in schools runs the danger of trivializing our nation's core ideals." ✔ —*Mary Anne Hess*

BOOKS by NEA Members

We Rode the Orphan Trains
By Andrea Warren



This is NEA member Andrea Warren's second book about the parentless children who, between 1854 and 1929, boarded westbound trains in search of a home. Warren, a former high school teacher, authored *Orphan Train Rider*, which won the 1996 Horn Book Award for nonfiction as well as many state awards. $18. Order from Houghton Mifflin at 617/351-5000 or go to www.hhmco.com.

Kyoto Connection
By Deborah Kemp

NEA member Deborah Kemp spent many years visiting Kyoto and other areas of Japan. In writing *Kyoto Connection*, she combined her years of learning about Japan with her personal experiences in that country. The book is a work of fiction about romance, intrigue, murder, and revenge. It is intended for a mature audience and isn't suitable for children. $10.95 plus s&h from www.1stbooks.com.

The Way it Was
By Alana Myles

The Way it Was is a story based on the real-life events of a young African-American girl facing prejudice in the South during the 1950s. It offers fresh insight into matters of race and America, while serving as a valuable new account of an era that should never be forgotten. $9.95 plus s&h from www.buybooksontheweb.com or call toll free 877/289-2665.

Tools for Building
By Jerome Leavitt

Looking for a unique way to channel a child's creative impulses? *Tools for Building* is more than just a guide to tools and how to use them safely. You and your child will begin a journey of creativity and accomplishment that will last a lifetime. Under adult supervision, tools can encourage children to turn off the TV, step out of their shell, and enter a new world of personal achievement. $8.95 plus s&h from www.buybooksontheweb.com or call toll free 877/289-2665.

FREE OR INEXPENSIVE

Shakespeare in Brief

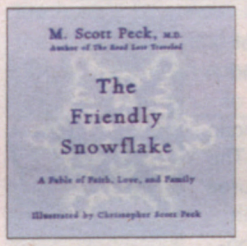
Want to ease kids into reading full-length Shakespeare? The *Sixty-Minute Shakespeare* series offers fast-paced condensations of six Shakespeare classics. Rather than retell, the series preserves the original play format and the Bard's language, while providing excellent footnotes to archaic words. It's a smart stepping stone to the real thing. The series includes *Much Ado About Nothing, Romeo and Juliet, Twelfth Night, Macbeth, A Midsummer Night's Dream,* and *Hamlet*. $8.99 each from Five Star Publications, 480/940-8182.

Women of Action

Marina Silva is a member of the Brazilian senate who fights to preserve the Amazon rainforest. Winona LaDuke is working to revive the lost culture of the Ojibwa Native Americans. Their inspiring stories are new titles in the popular *Women Changing the World* series of biographies for young people. $19.95 each from Consortium Book Sales & Distribution, 800/283-3572.

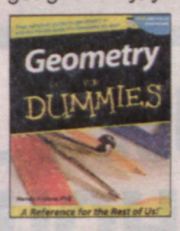
The Snowflake Returns

"Isn't every human being different, just like every snowflake?" The provocative question is from *The Friendly Snowflake*, a 1992 children's favorite by M. Scott Peck, M.D. (*The Road Less Traveled*). Briefly out of print, the book is back to help children understand love in today's troubled world. The handsome new edition includes original illustrations by the author's son Christopher. $9.95 from Andrews McMeel Publishing, 816/932-6700.



Geometrically Challenged?

Teacher or student, if you just don't get geometry, you can—and it can be fun. Honest. *Geometry for Dummies*, by Wendy Armone, Ph.D, is a new member of the acclaimed series by Dummies Press. Like its fellow Dummies books, it lets the reader work comfortably and imaginatively to digest a complex subject. $19.95 from Dummies Press, 212/884-500 or visit www.dummies.com.



Draw Your Own Hero

Did you know that Kevin Eastman, creator of the Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles, sold his first comic at age 13? Lots of kids would love to be comic artists but don't know where to start. *So, You Wanna Be a Comic Book Artist?* was written just for them. It covers everything from drawing instruction to plot lines to finding a publisher. $9.95 from Beyond Words Publishing, 503/531-8700.

Fast Tips for Teachers

Phi Delta Kappa International has introduced eight new titles in its Fastback series for teachers. The latest titles include: *Storytelling for Middle Grades Students; Professional Portfolios for Practicing Teachers; Helping ESL Learners Succeed; School-University Collaborations; Educating African-American Children; Learning Through Laughter . . . Again; Invitational Education;* and *Creating Wellness at Home and at School.* $4 each or $24 per set from Phi Delta Kappa, 800/766-1156.

NEW from the NEA Professional Library

EXCERPT

Through a biweekly support group called Heart-to-Heart, sixth graders in our school learn to handle the type of personal problems that can otherwise lead to discipline problems. We discuss school-based dilemmas, home conflicts, and many other difficulties young adolescents face. Heart-to-Heart has two formal goals: 1) to provide a warm, caring environment that facilitates personal and academic growth and 2) to provide a group support program that helps students deal in positive and appropriate ways with preadolescent concerns.

Innovative Discipline (revised edition)
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96 pp. $9.95 NEA Members
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Updated to include a section on school safety! You'll find a brand-new, extensive resource list of books, videos, audiotapes, Web sites, and organizations that promote school safety. This popular book also covers peer mediation, self-help sessions, a student-operated court in middle school, and other discipline programs that have transformed the cultures of schools.

To order, call 800/229-4200, or check the Web at www.nea.org/books.

Team Building Through Physical Challenges

By Donald R. Glover and Daniel W. Midura

Students will develop self-confidence and new skills as they explore the activities presented in *Team Building Through Physical Challenges*. They will be required to work together to achieve a common goal. They'll learn to value teamwork, practice leadership skills, improve listening skills, and appreciate individual differences. To order this book, call 763/553-1374 or E-mail dan.midura@fh. roseville.k12.mn.us.

TVTIPS

The Rosa Parks Story

CBS, February 24, 9:00 p.m. ET, check local listings.

This two-hour documentary is based on the life of Rosa Parks, whose moment of peaceful defiance on a segregated bus in 1955 sparked the modern-day civil rights movement. The film explores salient moments in Parks's childhood and early adult life that reveal the development of her dignity, pride, quiet strength, and courage, as she is drawn to social activism prior to her historic moment. KIDSNET has produced a six-page curriculum guide and poster and an online interactive guide for social studies teachers and chairs. For more information or to read the online guide, visit www.kidsnet.org/cbs/rosaparks. ✔

KIDSNET, a national resource for children's media in Washington, D.C., provides these listings. For additional listings and information, check the Web at www.kidsnet.org.

TVTIPS

African-American Landmarks

The History Channel, February 13, 10:00 p.m., ET, check local listings.
Renowned historian James Horton guides viewers on a tour of some of the known and little-known African-American landmarks in America. Through these sites, a story is told of African-American life, especially during the 18th and 19th centuries, the abolition movement, and the Civil War. The program also touches on important 20th century connections to the civil rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s.

American Experience – Monkey Trial

PBS, February 17, 9:00 p.m., ET, check local listings.
This American Experience special explores one of the epic legal battles of the 20th century. In 1925, John Scopes was arrested in Tennessee for teaching evolution in defiance of state law. His trial became an all-out debate between science and religion.

American Masters – Ralph Ellison: An American Journey

PBS, February 19, 9:00 p.m., ET, check local listings.
This American Masters special explores the life and work of Ralph Ellison, whose landmark novel *Invisible Man* won him a lifetime of awards and honors. The program features a tribute from Nobel laureate Toni Morrison and interviews with critic Stanley Crouch, author Shelby Steele, author and political activist Amiri Baraka, and Harvard University Professor Cornel West. The program also includes rare archival footage, never-before-seen photos from Ellison's family albums, and powerful re-creations of scenes from *Invisible Man*, the first time any of the novel has been filmed.

The Black Press: Soldiers Without Swords

PBS, February, check local listings.
Since the early 1800s, Black newspapers have existed in almost every major city in the United States. This documentary provides an in-depth

examination of the history and contributions of African-American newspapers. The program features interviews with editors, photographers, and journalists of the Black press, combined with archival footage and photographs.

The Middle Passage and Lumumba

HBO, February, check local listings.
In honor of Black History Month, HBO will feature two presentations that examine different facets of the ongoing and complex relationship between Africa and America.

The Middle Passage takes a realistic look at the horrors of the trans-Atlantic slave trade, capturing the beginning moment of African-American history. Structured as a poetic rumination, this presentation is told through the voiceover of a dead African captive whose spirit haunts the ocean route along which millions of Africans were deported to

the Americas or died en route. *Lumumba* reflects the interaction of African independence and U.S. foreign policy in the 1960s. Based on the true story of Patrice Lumumba, this film offers an emotional and authentic portrait of the man who became the first head of government of the newly independent Congo, only to be deposed and executed eight months later.

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EQUAL HOUSING OPPORTUNITY

CNN Newsroom–The Gullah Series

CNN, February, check local listings.

The coastal regions of Georgia and South Carolina are two of the most culturally rich areas in the United States, and they are also home to America's Gullah people. The Gullah people are a community of a half-million African-Americans, descendants of slaves from various African ethnic groups. Their slave ancestors were forced together on South Carolina plantations, and the Gullah people have held onto century-old traditions that can be traced back to their ancestors from West Africa. This CNN *Newsroom* presentation explores the efforts to preserve this branch of the African family tree that's taken root in America.

Egypt's Golden Empire

PBS, February 27, 9:00 p.m., ET, check local listings.

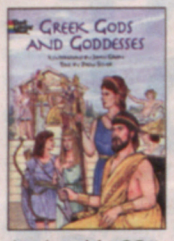
This three-part presentation tells the story of the Egyptian empire from its beginning in 1560 BC to its collapse in 1080 BC. In Part 1, "The Warrior Pharaohs," the concept of "empire" is born, as Egypt is united under Hatshepsut.

In Part 2, "Pharaohs of the Sun," the Egyptian empire reaches from Northern Syria to the Sudan in Africa. This time period is characterized by wealth, power, and prosperity. In Part 3, "The Last Great Pharaoh," a new dynasty emerges. However, foreign powers threaten, and Egypt is once again divided. Interviews with scholars and dramatic recreations bring the story to life.

FREE OR INEXPENSIVE

Coloring Books

If you get Persephone, Prometheus and Poseidon mixed up and wonder who the muses are, or if you teach ancient history, this book is for you. *Greek Gods and Goddesses*, by Drew Silver and illustrated by John Green, is a coloring book containing



spectacular tales of the love and lust, heroism and vengeance, and supernatural feats and superhuman weaknesses of their lives. Each of the book's 22 images is based on the myth and legend of a Greek god or hero, and each appears beside a page of descriptive text. You'll learn about Poseidon's wrathful destruction of Odysseus's ship; Apollo slaying the monstrous Python; the return of Persephone from the Underworld; Eos (dawn) streaking across the sky in her chariot; and many other dramatic stories. A great way to introduce youngsters to Greek mythology. $3.95. Go to: www.doverpublications.com.

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Absolutely NO membership dues are used to market this program.
This certificate of deposit is offered through MBNA America Bank, N.A. FDIC-insured up to $100,000 per depositor. Member FDIC. MBNA, MBNA America, and GoldCertificate are federally registered service marks of MBNA America Bank, N.A.
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CDNT0202

Traditional Boats from Around the World (44 pages), a coloring book by A. G. Smith, contains 44 carefully researched and accurately rendered illustrations of boats through history, including, Welsh coracles, an Arab dhow, a Grand Banks dory, a Samoyed fishing boat of northern Russia, and many others. Each craft is shown in an appropriate setting, and brief captions accompany the detailed illustrations. $3.95. www.dover publications.com.

Technology and Student Learning

Okay, so you have a computer in your classroom. Are you sure your students are actually learning anything from their technology projects? And what are the best

strategies for integrating technology throughout the entire school system? What does the research say? SRI Interna-tional, a leading independent research institute, has published a new book that chronicles six urban high schools' use of technology to support their educational goals. *The Connected School: Technology and Learning in High School* (240 pages), by Barbara Means, William R. Penuel, and Christine Padilla, found that the most successful technology applications were those that empowered students to think for themselves. Exercises that required students to apply technology to complex, extended tasks (for example, interacting with distant scientists involved in actual scientific expeditions and investigations) were among the most effective applications. $27. Available from Jossey-Bass at 800/274-4434.

Focus, Insight, and Creativity

For those days when you could use a little extra dose of inspiration and motivation, *Private Lessons: A Book of Meditations for Teachers*, provides 180 messages—one for every school day of the year—that

are sure to renovate the enthusiasm and nourish the personal growth of teachers at every level everywhere. Each day offers an anecdote, a lesson supporting such themes as Growth, Opportunity, Flexibility, and Acceptance, and a quote by a notable like Rosa Parks, Helen Keller, Margaret Thacher, or Mahatma Gandhi. This absorbing volume (180 pages) by Joy Jones is available from Andrews McMeel Publishing. Call 816/932-6700. $10.95.

Brain Background

Education strategist Robin Fogarty,

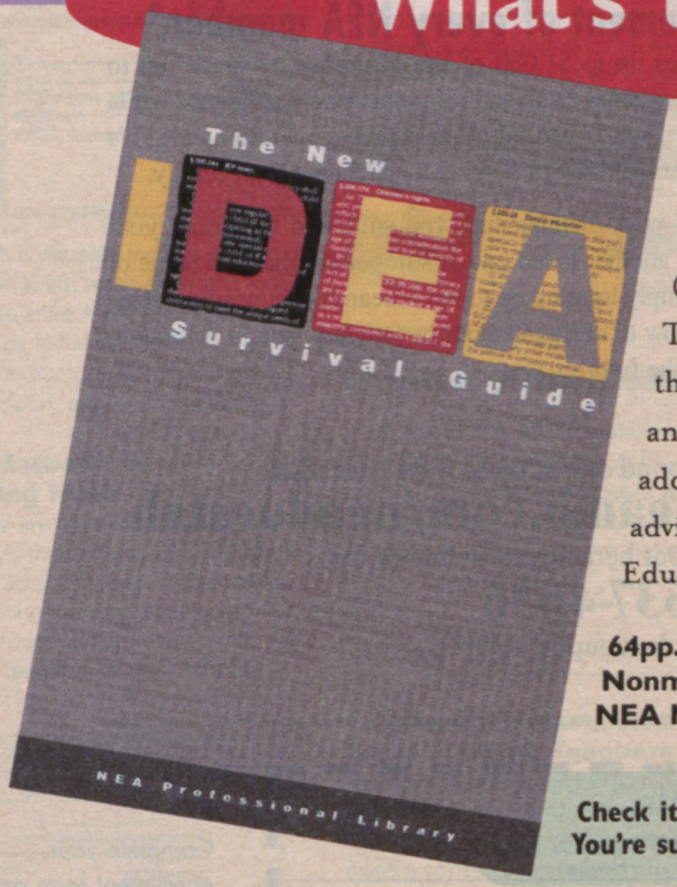
who offered keen insights into brain-compatible learning in his bestseller *Brain Compatible Classrooms*, has updated his book to include new research and to wrestle with the issue of standards. It provides a great bridge from research to practice for K-12 teachers seeking the high-achievement classroom in the modern education environment. $32.95 from SkyLight. Call 800/348-4474 or visit www.skylightedu.com.

On the Farm, Season to Season

The Year at Maple Hill Farm, a new picture book for kids ages 3-7, by

Alice and Martin Provensen, charmingly reminds us that imagination can still give virtual reality a run for its money. The book takes children through a year on a farm, season by season, and introduces them to the animals, chores, and joys of the rural world. $6.99 from Aladdin Paperbacks. Visit www.SimonSaysKids.com.

What's the big IDEA?



That's just what thousands of classroom teachers have asked since the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) was introduced in 1997. Now, help is finally here! The NEA Professional Library's *The New IDEA Survival Guide* is the book you've been waiting for. The easy question and answer format leads you through a number of scenarios to address your most pressing concerns. You'll get practical advice on dealing with discipline, developing Individualized Education Programs and much, much more.

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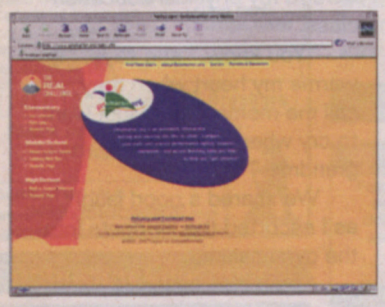
WEB WINNERS

Science/Math Web Site

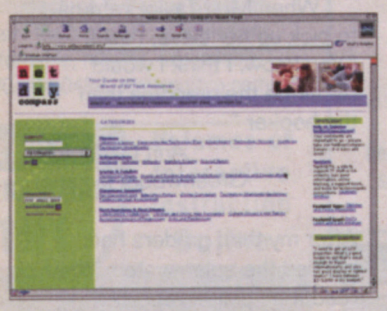
A new free science and math Web site, www.getsmarter.org, offers K-12 students a chance to test their skills against their international



peers—and have fun in the process. Students can compare their performance based on the Third International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) in 1995-99. Access hints, tutorials, and links to the best Web sites for increased understanding and improved performance in math and science.

Ed Tech Resources

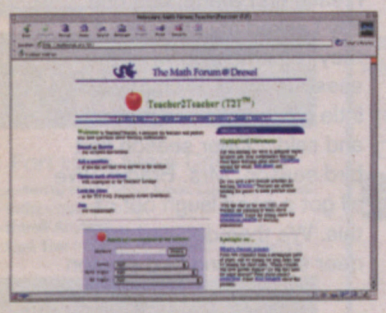
This free, non-commercial service lists more than 1,700 high-quality "ed tech" resources. The site, www.netdaycompass.org, provides teachers, administrators, and tech



staff with a valuable tool for making decisions about technology and maximizing its impact in the classroom. Resources focus on technology planning, infrastructure, funding, classroom support, and best practices.

New Methods of Learning Math

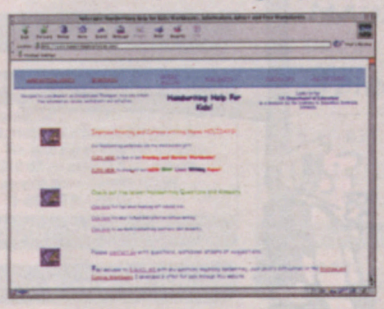
Students are learning math in many new ways these days, due in part to schools adopting new math curriculum meeting rigorous standards. If you're curious about how math is being taught in today's schools, Teacher2Teacher is for you. Visit



http://mathforum.org/t2t for a question-and-answer service to learn more about both the teaching and learning of mathematics. Every question is archived for easy reference and is searchable by keyword, grade level, and math or educational topic.

Ask the Experts

Here's a unique Web site, perfect for kids who are struggling with their handwriting. The site, www.handwritinghelpforkids.com, features hands-on activities for righties and



lefties, practice worksheets, and tips to improve pencil grasp. Teacher tips are provided, including bilateral coordination help and writing instrument selection guidelines.

Homework Help

Students never need get stuck on math homework again. Now there's an online Web site for high school (and college) students to work through the actual homework problems assigned by their teachers. Students will find guided solutions to problems in standard algebra, geometry, pre-calculus, and calculus textbooks on www.hotmath.com. Hotmath has solutions for all the homework problems in the leading

math textbooks. Membership is from $4 to $9 per month, and there's free access to algebra and geometry textbooks during the school day. Check out the site by logging on as a "guest."

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Teachers Network, AT&T Team for New Teachers

Teachers Network (www.teachersnetwork.org), with a grant from AT&T Foundation, has developed a series of interactive streaming videos offering practical instruction for the novice teacher and serving as a form of "digital mentoring." The videos are accompanied by actual grade/course-specific lesson plans and also tie in to online professional development courses for new teachers. View the streaming videos online at www.teachersnetwork.org.

DIVERSITY Calendar

February

February 5—Anniversary of Mexican Constitutions
A holiday to celebrate the anniversary of the adoption of the Constitutions of 1857 and 1917. Visit www.elbalero.gob.mx/kids/history/html/rev/constitu.html.

February23—Id al-Adha
Muslim holy day known as the Feast of Sacrifice. Visit http://library.thinkquest.org/11719/vasishtfiles/idaladha.html.

February 23—W.E.B. DuBois's Birthday
DuBois was a renowned Black writer and editor, and an impassioned orator. Visit www.duboislc.org/index.html.

february

March

March 1-31—National Mental Retardation Awareness Month
www.mentalhealth.org/highlights/marchmr.asp.

National Women's History Month
www.nwhp.org.

March 1—Korean Independence Movement Day
On March 1, 1919, a group of Koreans led an independence movement against Japanese colonial rule, which ultimately led to Korea's independence. Thirty-three independence fighters promulgated the Declaration of Independence to the entire people, and fought with their lives to gain independence. March 1 is observed to commemorate this historical event. www.indiana.edu/~easc/holidays/korea/korea.htm#mar.

march

Carnegie Hall Sets New Online Initiative

Carnegie Hall's Listening Adventures presents a new way to enjoy music. Rather than go to a concert, watch a performance on TV, or listen to music on the radio, you can experience a unique visual interpretation of a piece of music using animated images, activities, and stories. Imagine a classical music "playstation" for children (and yes, adults too)! The maiden voyage of the Listening Adventures takes you to the New World—that's Dvorak's "New World," his Symphony No. 9, which celebrated the excitement of discovery. Go to www.listening adventures.org.

Money for Music Education

The Mockingbird Foundation (MFI) offers competitive grants to schools and nonprofit organizations in the area of music education for children. The foundation is particularly interested in projects that encourage and foster creative expression in any musical form (including composition, instrumentation, vocalization, or improvisation), but also recognizes broader and more basic needs within conventional instruction. MFI encourages applications associated with diverse or unusual musical styles, genres, forms, and philosophies. Grants range in size from $50 to $5,000. Application deadline: ongoing. Visit www.mockingbird foundation.org/funding/guidelines.html.

September 11 Video From Holt, CNN

Textbook publisher Holt, Rinehart and Winston and CNN's *Newsroom*, the network's daily program for classrooms, are making available a new double set of videos as a follow-up to one released last December, covering the September 11 terrorist attacks.

The set will include expanded coverage, additional background information, and a more detailed chronology of events.

The first videos, *September 11, 2001: A Turning Point in History—The First 30 Days*, were mailed to social studies departments or media specialists at more than 16,000 U.S. public high schools. The tape features an introduction by U.S. Secretary of Education Rod Paige encouraging teachers to discuss the attacks in their classes.

All content has been screened to be age-appropriate for a secondary school audience. For more information on the video set, call 800/225-5425 or go to http://turnerlearning.com/fyi/turningpoint/index.html.

in the Light Lane

Not Really Naughty

When I entered the cafeteria to pick up my class after lunch, a student rushed up to me and complained that two other students were swearing.

I called the two over to me to attempt to understand the situation. They were highly indignant when I told them of the other child's complaint.

"Oh, no, Mrs. Gaji, we weren't swearing. We would never do that. We were just telling each other all the naughty words that we know."

Kathy Gaji
Binghamton, New York

I teach the English class in the alternative school, housed in our high school. The students are a very eclectic bunch, and although they have a myriad of social issues and are prone to extreme attention-seeking behaviors, they are fascinating and funny.

Last week one of the seniors came to me and said, "Mrs. Erb, Matt shaved off all his eyebrows." I whispered, "Now, Jack, it's not nice to talk about other students in the room. Matt may have been born like that." Jack replied, "No way, Mrs. Erb. He had 'em yesterday!"

Lisa Erb
Gibsonia, PA

I was subbing for the art teacher at the school that I retired from in Rowe. When the younger students came into the art room, I noticed a new first grader. I introduced myself to her before we started our project. I sensed that she was a bit afraid of me, so I gave her a bit of extra attention to help her feel at ease.

After I complimented her work, she looked up at me and said, "Mrs. Laffond, were you ever a witch?"

"What would make you think that?" I answered.

"That," she said, pointing to the mole on the side of my face.

"Oh," I chuckled. "No, I was never a witch, but I sure wish I knew how to ride a broomstick!"

"Me too," she smiled.

Wanita Sioui Laffond
Shelburne Falls, Massachusetts

At the beginning of the school year, it's often a challenge to get the kindergarten students to feel comfortable on the school bus.

Sharing a seat with people they don't know isn't an easy adjustment. One afternoon I noticed a little girl talking and laughing with her seat mate. I could not help but say something about how proud I was of her for making a new friend. When I said, "Just think if you made a new friend everyday what you would have."

She responded very quickly, "Too many!"

Vera Wallace
Marana, Arizona

"There's where they send you if you always color with your black crayon."

The events of September 11 caused much confusion to the diverse population of my advanced, high school ESL class. At one point in the discussion, a young man from Colombia asked if the terrorists were like the guerrillas in his country.

I thought it was quite an astute observation, one he could best relate to. Then I noticed the young lady from India with a very puzzled look on her face. When I asked her what was wrong, she quietly remarked that she didn't understand why monkeys would be given guns.

Ann Ribinsky Brown
South Plainfield, New Jersey

I teach high school English at a juvenile court school in northern California. During a literature unit, while discussing early childhood story experiences, I made reference to a lullaby!

Observing some confused looks, I said, "Everyone knows what a lullaby is, right?" One student, without hesitation replied, "Sure, thats the story you tell to the judge!" (Obviously his experiences more recently concerned "alibi.")

Caralyn Carter
Stonyford, California

When teaching first graders at the reading table, I asked the small group to take out the color green from their color boxes.

One girl pulled out a crayon and asked me what was written on the side of the crayon.

Reading it I told her the color was called "Granny Smith." She said, "Oh, I have a Granny and Grampa Smith! They are brother and sister."

I then asked her how she knew that her Granny and Grandpa Smith were brother and sister.

She said, "Oh, they have the same last name as me and my brother."

Theresa Braune
Ames, Iowa

Got Laughs?

● Have a funny school story, anecdote, or vignette you'd like to share with other NEA members? You can send contributions to "In the Light Lane," NEA Today, 1201 16th St., NW, Washington, DC 20036. Fax: 202/822-7206. Send E-mail to neatoday@nea.org.

● Want a classroom chuckle delivered to your E-mail box once a week? Subscribe to the new "In the Light Lane" mailing list. Just send an E-mail to join-lightlane@list.nea.org (no subject or message needed).

All in a Day's Work

Mrs. Taylor was smiling when she brought her kindergartners to my physical education class.

"You know." she says, "It warms my heart when they call me mommy, but I just want to cry when they call me grandma."

We shared a good laugh as I escorted the students into the gymnasium.

At the conclusion of class, the students like to help me put away the p.e. equipment. "Boys and girls," I began, "Please put the jump ropes in the box, the balls on the shelf, and give me the hula hoops." As I say this, I extended both my arms straight out to the side. Having done this many times, the kids know exactly what to do.

At that moment, Austin instructed the rest of the class, "Give Mrs. Gandolph the hula hoops. She's the hooker."

When Mrs. Taylor returns to pick up her class, I said, "You know, I think I would rather be the grandma than the hooker."

Ann Gandolph
Greenwood, Indiana

After my third graders had studied the solar system, they read their planet reports aloud. One student read his report on Earth. As he read he said, "My planet Earth has land, peace, water, and atmosphere."

When he had completed reading the report, I said, "That was a fine report, but I didn't understand when you said 'peace.'" He replied, "You know—peace on earth." I just smiled and said, "Now I understand."

Monica Helzer
Orange, California

I teach first grade, and one day I asked my students if they remembered what the seasons were. Promptly a little girl in my class perked up and said, "Deer season and bird season, Mrs. Brady!" We all got a good laugh out of this. We then decided that deer season and bird season were "seasons" but that they were part of another season, fall, which we had been studying in our classroom.

Kami Brady
Havre, Montana

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